

**Women Defining the Horizons :
Adult Education in a rural community in South Africa
1979 - 2000.**

Khanya Rajuili

**Ph.D.
The University of Edinburgh
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Acknowledgements

For an African woman to write about education for adults in a country that has just had the first unitary education system for five years, I discovered in the process, was brave and daring. My anxieties were increased by the reality that I was to write about adults classified as 'illiterate' in terms of formal academic status. Yet their history and their experiences, as I have discovered, would qualify them to be classified as 'literate' but not 'learned'. For me the opportunity to affirm that adult education is a human right has been a great opportunity for which I am grateful to a number of people to whom I want to express my gratitude.

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Abstract

There is considerable controversy in the Adult Basic Education (ABE) field over its aims, purposes and relationship to social change. ABE has played an important role in South Africa in redressing past educational inequalities. During the period 1979 to 1990 ABE was particularly important for empowerment of women and youth. The acquisition of basic literacy was considered to be one of the vehicles through which 'formerly excluded' adults could attain greater social, political and economic empowerment. Such assumptions also form the foundation for adult education in post-apartheid South Africa.

However, the changes in the sector, most notable after 1994, reflect the form of a 'new' Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) that underpins the policy of life-long learning. The latter aims to promote the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes required for social and economic transformation. This is relevant to, and important in the current context of debates about the African Renaissance, which is recognised as a renewal of a vision for a changing nation.

Current debates over the 'new' ABET situate this study which seeks to present a perspective on women's emancipation. Through critical analyses of issues connected with gender and power over the past twenty years, it draws attention to adult education as being concerned with universalism, collectivism and communal relationships. The thesis attempts to establish parameters for evaluating the ABET policy and its implementation. The research therefore focuses upon ABET policies to delineate their relevance for women in the rural village of Moutse, in Mpumalanga. Through a case study based upon observations and interviews, an analytical foundation is laid for assessing the impact of adult education and training on female adult learners in this rural community. The experience of Moutse learners has shown that ABET has the potential to empower participants, particularly the female population, by encouraging a sense of ownership and control over their lives and over their communities.

The conclusion which emerges is that Adult Basic Education was indeed part of a radical social movement that emerged from and supported a socio-political struggle. However, the 'new' ABET is criticised for focusing on outcomes and skills at the expense of knowledge contained within cultural and traditional practices. The study therefore takes into account not only the cultural forces that shape collective and communal relationships, but also attends to the macro and micro economic and political influences that impact upon educational programmes. Inevitably, these forces and influences shape the public perceptions of the value placed upon ABET programmes.

It may be argued that current adult education policy might benefit from a greater awareness of the potentialities of a relevant and transformative curriculum. South African ABET policy-making could be enhanced by implementing its principles about learner participation, in recognition that those most affected by adult education have the most to contribute towards its development.

ABBREVIATIONS

ABE	Adult Basic Education
ABE(T)	Adult Basic Education and Training
AET	Adult Education and Training
ANC	African National Congress
AZAPO	Azanian Peoples Organisation
CEPD	Centre for Education Policy Development
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CBO(s)	Community Based Organisation(s)
CGE	Commission for Gender Equality
DBSA	Development Bank of South Africa
DoE	Department of Education
ETQA(s)	Education and Training Training Qualifications Agencies
ERS	Education Renewal Strategy
GEAR	Growth Employment and Redistribution
IDT	Independent Development Trust
IEB	Independent Examinations Board
HSRC	Human Science Research Council
JET	Joint Education Trust
MCLP	Masifundisane Community Literacy Project
NACTU	National Council of Trade Unions
NECC	National Education Co-ordinating Committee
NEDLAC	National Economic and Development Labour Council
NEPI	National Education and Policy Investigation
NFE	Non-formal Education
NGO(s)	Non-government organisations(s)
NLC	National Literacy Co-operation
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSB(s)	National Standards Bodies
NTB	National Training Board
NTSI	National Training Strategy Initiative
OBE	Outcome Based Education
PAC	Pan African Congress
PRISEC	Private Sector Education Committee
SACABE	South African Committee on Adult Basic Education
SACHED	South African Committee for Higher Education
SADTU	South African Democratic Teacher's Union
SAIRR	South African Institute for Race Relations
SANDF	South African National Defence Force
SANGOCO	South African NGO Coalition
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SGB	Standard Generating Bodies
SSB	Standard Setting Bodies
UDF	United Democratic Front
USWE	Using Spoken and Written English

Time Line of the Development of ABET in the Thesis

Note: The political protest and opposition to racism and the discriminating education system in South Africa began far earlier than the period of study, most notably after the introduction of apartheid 'Bantu Education' in the fifties. The period chosen, 1979 to 2000 because this was the period when adult education became important to women.

- 1976** Soweto uprising
- 1977** Death of Steve Biko
- 1980** 1st Education Committee
- 1981** de Lange Report on Non-formal Education
- 1982** The fall of gold; recession in South Africa
- 1983** NTB and HSRC study on training needs for South Africa
- 1985** Escalation of violence; United Democratic Front formed
- 1985** NECC formed
- 1990 – 1992:** NEPI Investigation
- 1991** National Training Strategy Initiative
- 1993** COSATU's Participatory Research; SACABE Conference
- 1994** The first democratic elections in South Africa
- 1995** Education White Paper released
- 1995** ABET Directorate in place; Draft ABET policy released; NQF review
- 1997** ABET policy adopted
- 1998 – 1999** Pilot phase on OBE; introduction of the Cascade Model
- 1999** HSRC evaluation of OBE
- 2000** Review Committee on OBE

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Introduction

On the 8th September each year literacy campaigners throughout the world recognise and sometimes even celebrate International Literacy Day. In 1996 when the then Deputy President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, addressed the Literacy Book Launch linked to the literacy campaign, he alluded to the fact that one of the consequences of low literacy was that adults could not ‘act as full human beings in their own worlds’. The majority of people had little opportunity to make meaningful contributions to the decisions that affect their lives. They could not interpret their own world, and ‘so life passed them as if they were dead’. He could have been referring to their personal world, as in the family, to their immediate social structures in the community, or to the socio-political and economic systems that are part of the larger world. Since their own worlds are directly or indirectly determined by ideologies conceived remotely from the people that are affected by them, they cannot ‘act as full human beings’, that is with any meaningful autonomy in the shaping of these worlds. As the chairperson of the event one was left with lingering disquiet from Mbeki’s message. Even now his words continue to raise unanswered questions about what it means ‘to act as full human beings’ and how adult learners can define ‘their own worlds’ (Mbeki, 1996).

New challenges facing education in the new South Africa emerged in the first five-year transitional period after the first democratic elections. These challenges were inherent in the process of restructuring education. These were challenges of an external and internal nature that resulted from the re-entry of South Africa into the world politics. With the opening of international markets opportunities for competition and co-operation arose. If South Africa was to be an equal and forceful partner in this global market, it needed to improve its productivity levels, adapt to the fast changing world of information technology, and capitalise on its human resources, primarily through sound education and training.

Internally, the main challenge comes from the asymmetry between the expectations of its citizens, the majority of whom had been excluded from full participation in the

political and economic sectors on racial grounds. At a technical level, such a challenge related to the level of adult literacy, which was 74% in 1995, and its capacity to underwrite people's expectations (Statistics SA, 1995).

Inevitably, the change in education is of critical importance during this period of transition from unequal educational provision to a situation in which equal education for all is adopted. In this context, equal access and equal opportunity are, according to the Adult Basic Education and Training Policy, the guiding principles for redressing the past educational imbalances, which favoured the white population. The introduction of the first single Education Policy and the role of Adult Basic Education (ABE), seem to be faced with challenges considering that access and equity are the major principles for redress. Such difficulties affect how Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) can be put into practice.

In this thesis Adult Basic Education (ABE), as distinct from Adult Education and Training (AET), will refer to all forms of organised learning, which recognise informal and non-formal education for people who are not literate. This learning may include aspects of personal development, numeracy and basic literacy in any form. In the South African context, and for the sole purpose of discussion and consistency, Adult Basic Education and Adult Education are used interchangeably in this thesis.

Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) is, according to the South African policy, defined as:

The general conceptual foundation towards lifelong learning and development, comprising knowledge, skills and attitudes required for social, economic and political participation and transformation applicable to a range of contexts. ABET is flexible, developmental and targeted at the specific needs of particular audiences and, ideally, provides access to nationally recognised certificates (ABET Policy, 1997).

The above policy is grounded on past experiences which encouraged participation and facilitated access in order to ensure that the voice of previously excluded people

could be heard. The thesis will argue that this principle has not been sustained. In addition to access, gender equality is another principle of redress. The first aim of this study, therefore is to find out whether the changes in adult basic education have had any significance in the lives of women in the rural areas of Moutse, in Mpumalanga Province. In order to do this, the study will consider the political context which has, until the present day, formed the background out of which ABE has developed, the way in which ABE has changed to ABET, and the effects of this on a specific group of African women. The second aim is to explore the impact and role of adult basic education, and to understand the constraints in which Adult Basic Education and Training is now functioning. At the same time cognisance is taken of the reactions and attitudes of the learners to the 'new' opportunities presented to them, their motivations and persistence striving for an improved quality of life, the yardstick for what constitutes improvement and their value judgements about their current socio-economic status.

These questions are particularly important during a period of change: South Africa had been subjected to colonialism and people responded with ideologies of Pan-Africanism, Communism and Black Consciousness. One must also take into account the developments unique to South Africa which are the background to the rise of Adult Basic Education during the period under study. Most notable was the influence of apartheid, which resulted in the Soweto riot in 1976. This event demonstrated the potential among people to use 'people's education'¹ to challenge the power of the apartheid State by exposing 'bantu'² education as a means of oppression through the forced introduction of Afrikaans into the curriculum.

Apartheid was seen as the pillar of the Afrikaner power base (Brooks and Brickhill, 1980:8), but sexism has also played a part. Consequently apartheid came to be perceived as an illegitimate, violent and immoral system. In such a climate of

¹ 'people's education' was a campaigning political slogan that was adopted as masses were mobilising groups in South Africa to agitate for changes in the provision of education.

² The word 'bantu' was used as a label for Africans in South Africa. The original meaning, in Nguni language refers to '*abantu*' – people, but it was deliberately applied with a dehumanising attitude to people who were not 'white'. The word 'bantu' is Constitutionally banned in South Africa.

opinion, refusal to attend school had its own legitimacy. The rise of the Black Consciousness movement was undermined by the death of its leader, Steve Biko, in September 1977. This premature demise of the widened gap between those who boycotted school and those who continued with education and created an urgent need for adult education programmes later on.

In the last twenty years, several policies have been adopted to address the increasing and widening gap in adult education. The adoption of a single education system in 1995 and the subsequent call for African Renaissance coincided with the period during which this study programme began.

Perhaps it may take more than strategy and more than structures and systems of adult education, to redress the educational situation in the country. If transformative adult education upholds the concept of democracy based on Africanhood, in which people do not allow racist history to define them, but are challenged to have control of their own lives and shape their own world, it remains to be explored whether the nature of the ‘new’³ adult basic education and training in South Africa has room for alternate strategies for the future. Strategies in which they can continue to ask questions about the type of future society that they want. Perhaps the educational goals may be fulfilled if a deliberate philosophy like the African Renaissance underpins these strategies.

The Relationship of African Renaissance to the Reconstruction of Adult Education

Since the 1994 elections a sense of pride and ‘South Africanness’, particularly among the black people, has been growing. The different cultures, languages, customs and diverse values which had been suppressed during the colonial era have started to be appreciated again. The adoption of the new Democratic Constitution on

³ The ‘new’ ABET policy (to be further discussed in chapter four) defines itself broadly and recognises the transformative value of education.

the 8th May 1996 was ushered in as a symbol of the re-awakening of 'Africanness' among South Africans.

This Renaissance started to restore human dignity and a sense of nationhood and belonging. One veteran of African studies remarked that:

if this awakening is allowed to take root and influence the attitude and drives of people towards self-determination, it may help in building a better destiny. This will take, among other forms, an analysis of the people's history, their languages and allow their culture to be an inclusive part of redesigning the programmes to empower all South Africans (Mamdani, 1997:12).

New ways of restoring national pride were sought. Thus South Africa embarked on national projects like the 'Nation Building', a campaign directed by the editor of the 'Sowetan' newspaper, Agree Klaaste. The importance of such and similar campaigns was to restore human dignity and the collective identity which was destroyed by political history. Nation-building was an informal medium of re-educating South African people to restore their sense of being. It was a type of education which formal institutions of learning have not directly addressed. Nation-building related to free informal and creative ways of setting up programmes, all-encompassing, accessible and voluntary. It was also a process in which individuals or groups sought to meet the social, political, cultural and economic agenda through their own resources. Each year the 'Sowetan' invited nominations of exemplary community leaders, assessed the competitors' work in relation to community development and leadership, then organised a gala function at which the best leader was recognised and awarded a humanitarian status.

The *Masakhane* campaign, whose patron was the former Anglican Bishop Desmond Tutu, was mounted at a social level. It aimed at changing the non-co-operative defiant attitudes among people who boycotted rent payments so that they could become accountable and responsible citizens. They were, under the new dispensation, expected to acknowledge the importance and the need to pay for social services. At a political level, the Reconstruction and Development Programme

(RDP), was introduced in 1994 to promote and support a plan in which people could participate in the development process, in which ABE plays a vital role. Its core principles were integrated planning, people-centred practices, democracy, self-reliance and basic education for all.

In the South African context, the term 'reconstruction' signals the shift from concerns with the injustices and inequalities of the preceding era to the need for practical policies for the future. In particular, it signals the end of the opposition politics of the past and the need for partnership between the major interest groups representing state, business and civil society. The term 'development' signals the end of liberation politics and the refocusing on plans for economic and social reform (Prinsloo et al., 1996; NEPI, 1992a; 1993; South African Government RDP White Paper, 1994).

In 1994 the Reconstruction and Development Programme was embraced and adopted as a philosophy of self-reliance whose aim was to encourage participatory democracy in re-building the country. It aimed at a coherent and integrated policy framework to 'mobilise all our people and all our resources to finally get rid of apartheid and build a democratic, non-racial and non-sexist future' (RDP, 1994:1).

Such a programme and many other localised individual and national programmes culminated in what the deputy president recognised as a 'resurgence of feeling proud of Africanhood' from which he coined the term 'African Renaissance' (Mbeki, 1997). He endorsed that deep sense of nationhood in the speech, 'I am an African', delivered when the Constitution was finally adopted in Parliament. The commonality between the Nation Building campaigns, the RDP and the African Renaissance is that they all support a holistic principle to reconstruction. All uphold principles similar to those endorsed in the ABET policy: equity and redress, democracy, development and reconstruction, access, development and integration. It is from this observation that the philosophy of African Renaissance could be useful in that many of its fundamental concepts could be incorporated in the re-definition of adult education.

Although these principles supported an ‘holistic’ approach to re-writing education, they are based on a philosophy not endorsed by some corporate free marketers. Though the RDP philosophy was based on self-reliance, on full and active participation of members of the society, it has been seen to have inherently contradictory intentions, a move about which von Kotze had reservations when she said:

... placing the onus of development on the individual people could also be seen as unwillingness on the part of the state to take on the responsibility for intervening in the social arena and providing basic needs where households and communities are unable to do so... This points to the danger that the RDP will serve the more organised sector of society while further disadvantaging the less organised and already dis-empowered (von Kotze, 1998:154).

The RDP processes rekindled the collective and voluntary spirit that young people in particular, imbibed in the early seventies when they took initiatives on matters of social concern. The reconstruction and development plan was altered and effectively replaced by a macro-economic policy Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) which is discussed in the first chapter.

While the momentum for RDP was decreasing, the philosophy of African Renaissance, captured in the newly published book by Mbeki (1998) ‘AFRICA – The time has come,’ was reasserted. It complemented the RDP vision by promoting a sense of a multi-faceted nationhood, and also a continental drive: ‘the main pillar of our international policy, not only relating to Africa, but in all our international relations globally’ Moeletsi Mbeki (1997). Therefore, African Renaissance can encompass a fullness of humanity if its philosophical bases support political, social and cultural imperatives. One commentary on 16th March 1999, summarised the concept in the ‘*South African Mail and Guardian*’ newspaper:

it seems at best (that African Renaissance) is a commitment to revitalising Africa as a continent economically, politically, culturally and bringing it into a more central position in the global village. Inevitably this means both building greater self-esteem among all Africans (black and white) and restoring the values of liberty, community and democracy (SA Mail and Guardian, 1999:3).

One organiser and an observer at a conference on African Renaissance in Durban, interpreted the concept as:

A revival philosophy – a festival to call on Africans in the continent and in the diaspora to come together to secure Africa's future and its rightful place on the world stage (SA Mail and Guardian, 1999:9).

So at one level it is a *policy*, a *concept*, and a *vision* whose elements are listed as: economic recovery of the African continent; the establishment of a political democracy on the African continent; the need to break neo-colonial relations between Africa and the western economic powers; the mobilisation of the African people to take their destiny into their own hands and the development of a people-driven and people-centred economic growth.

At another level it is a *descriptive and analytic process* with which to look at the history of Africa as 'an epoch which has happened, yet continues to happen' (Mbeki, 1997; Zuma, 1999) in the way history repeats itself. In this process new strategies and policies may be formed, but the chances of being derailed by the international agenda are possible. This is the analysis of economic transformation for Africa presented by Mbeki (1997). Moeletsi Mbeki analyses the historical processes of change in Africa into two phases. First, the period between 1930 to 1960 which he calls the arrival of cold war in Africa. This included the overthrow of Nkrumah, the death of Patrice Lumumba, the arrest of the South African Rivonia fighters and the instigation of apartheid in South Africa. The second phase, and the most challenging for a renaissance, has occurred in the past forty years, a period characterised by the greater influence of the western powers on Africa's economic policies. The impact of the external, western influence, creates tensions and contradictory visions or what Mavivi Manzini (1997) calls 'direct economic competition', for African countries

who wish to defend themselves against global pressure and the formulae of the International Monetary Institutions. But Moeletsi Mbeki contends that:

African Renaissance will have arrived if in the re-shaping of the future vision 'Africa's educated classes cease to be sycophants and imitations of things European and instead ... return to the source of African civilisation' (Mbeki, 1997:7).

The same initiative could be applied to adult basic education. When ABET policy-making recognises African experiences and contexts for learning, perhaps the hegemony of the western thought will be diminished. Adult education thus still has a role to play as a programme through which Africans can define their future vision in the period of change. In the process of restoring human dignity whereby sexual discrimination is opposed, and positive attitudes rebuilt, adult education can be instrumental in changing some of the previous inequities created by political history.

For example, blacks in South Africa were conditioned to accept ideologies and behaviours that were foreign to themselves. Forced removals left many African people displaced in strange and exclusively rural and barren lands. Family structures were broken up, and forced separation of family members as they sought employment in the urban areas (Bernstein, 1985). Men and women continued to adapt to modern and urban or semi-urban pressures or to the urbanised lifestyles of the industrialised worlds. They continued to be a misfit to urban life, yet when they returned to their rural homes their life styles did not match the patterns of rural life. Others could not fit into technological methods of production because they were not educated enough even at the basic level, and could claim no permanence anywhere. Because many of them had low literacy levels they found it difficult, for example, to relate to the requirements of the new industrial economy.

In order to reverse the situations of 'displaced' groups of people already described, adult education can be one of the available options, which helps to resolve the psychological, physical, intellectual and cultural distortions.

Secondly, tension emanates from the neglect of education for African women in particular. In the current era during which South Africa works towards entry into an

industrial and technological globalised economy the role of adult education cannot be overlooked. It may serve both psychological and attitudinal attempts to restore dignity and also create a second chance for learning. New knowledge can be acquired, new skills can be learnt and understanding of how ideologies affect people. In addition, adult education may highlight the inadequacies that individuals have if their aim is to make a contribution to the new patterns in the technological arena.

Although at a national level, through the Constitution, the rights of all human beings and particularly those of women are recognised in South Africa, it is argued that the principles will take a long time to be realised at a local level. Dissemination of education about Human Rights, and Equality, unless well planned and built into the ABET programmes, may not reach all sectors of the community as intended. If there can be a commitment to support the vision and goals of the philosophy of the African Renaissance and those of the RDP, then perhaps people's sense of pride and sense of selfhood, which was suppressed by history, can be rekindled. Perhaps some of the foregoing emancipatory issues may be addressed. At the same time, it may be argued ABET can be used to raise the teaching of history to include Human Rights, Gender Equality and economic emancipation.

As an African woman with more than ten years of experience working with adult women in a variety of learning programmes, the personal interest to explore the meanings of learning held by and from women cannot be overstated. The motivation is drawn from the experience of working in community education with the South African Committee for Higher Education (SACHED) from 1986 to 1990. This experience involved evaluation, training and community work with projects and programmes. That community education link continued when projects asked for evaluation services of the Continuing Education Centre at Witwatersrand from 1991 to 1992. Also relevant was my work as an adult education project officer for three years (1993 to 1995) at the Joint Education Trust (JET). Applications for funds were received for project work, assessed and submitted for financial approval to the JET board of Trustees. To be successful applicants had to meet the criteria and be in support of youth work, teacher training, pre-school and adult basic education.

Along with the above were responsibilities for training, advocacy, evaluation and monitoring, research, and participation in policy formulation. This covered both policy and practice and included exposure to the politics of foreign aid. Throughout the twenty year period in question, foreign and national financial resources have been invested in support of many programmes addressing social issues and furthering development expertise among volunteers and professionals in the adult basic education field.

Only limited research⁴ has been conducted into the above developments. Little research on women in adult education, particularly those in rural communities, has been undertaken. It is envisaged therefore that this study will be a contribution to existing knowledge.

The parallel evolution of adult basic education and the empowerment of women have characterised developments in South Africa in the last twenty years. Another feature is the inclusive nature of empowerment processes in which ‘people-participation’ has been upheld by community structures. Nevertheless, there is great apprehension that some groups in society, particularly women, may not be served by the changes in education. It is argued in this thesis that adult basic education may leave women on the margins. In order to understand this marginalisation, it is intended that this thesis will examine Habermas’ argument that adult education can be used to ‘defend the terrain’. This suggests that adult education could be an emancipatory force through which groups can maintain their self-direction and defend their autonomy. This is a relevant theoretical perspective for examining the historical processes that have shaped adult education. However, emancipatory strategies proposed by Mayo (1997) and Inglis (1997) are also relevant. They raise questions about what type of ‘transformative’ adult basic education and training programme is envisaged for the future.

⁴ Some of the researchers include Walters, Shirley 1987; 1997; French, 1990a; Aitchison, 1991; Castle, Jane, 1992; CEPD, 1994; Prinsloo and Breier, 1996.

This thesis has eight chapters. The first chapter reviews the literature on adult education. These address the role of the state in a changing society - the social uses of literacy and issues of empowerment and transformation. These lead to the recognition that a changing nation like South Africa does not merely move into a new democracy but is also constructing a new philosophy of African Renaissance on which a future vision is predicated. Primarily, African Renaissance, a call for 'the death of the racist past' and a renewal of Africanhood, aims at defining a new future in which racism and sexism are not part of the emerging democracy. The second chapter presents the debates about feminism as a radical women's movement. Feminist approaches are examined, beginning with analyses of gender issues, considering the tensions on how knowledge about women is derived and defined and the related practice within each. This chapter concludes with a situation of Southern Africa and specifically South Africa, the latter highlighting the role of a national coalition effort and the input by women from a national rural association. The third chapter provides an historical overview of the developments in adult education between 1979 and 1994. This was characterised by 'popular education', a period during which 'really useful knowledge', was acquired, wide participation was endorsed by many of those involved, and thus, 'people's education' created a sense of empowerment among the people. Chapter four provides a full account of the 'new' ABET Policy, showing its weaknesses and gaps in the way policy was conceptualised and the inherent difficulties in its implementation. The conceptual analysis of policy formation and a reflection of the practical implications set the basis for research questions on how ABET is perceived at a policy and implementation level. It raises questions about the relevance of the programme for women, about their experiences of learning and how adult education has impacted on their lives. Chapter five provides the rationale for selecting the qualitative methodology and the description of the procedures (meeting 'key informants', negotiating entry, content analysis of project records) and processes (focus group interviews, individual interviews, and observations) for collecting data. In addition the chapter addresses the limitations in the methodology and implications of the data

collection processes. The research findings and deductions are found in chapters six and seven respectively. Finally, chapter eight summarises the arguments of the thesis and provides grounds for suggesting that all is not positive when one examines ABET in the new South Africa.

The study confirms the view that Adult Basic Education is indeed part of a social movement that emerged from, and was supported by, a socio-political struggle. It was out of this struggle that women made themselves part of the empowered force for change. It has been shown that the 'new' Adult Basic Education and Training policy focuses on outcomes and skills, but marginalises cultural and traditional practices. This case study draws attention not only to the cultural forces that shape collective and communal relationships, but also to the macro and micro economic and political influences that impact upon educational programmes. These forces and influences are shown to affect the values placed upon Adult Basic Education and Training programmes. Yet in Moutse, Adult Basic Education appears to be potentially a force for emancipation. Through Adult Basic Education and Training programmes, the participants, particularly women, can be seen to have acquired a sense of ownership and control over their lives and of their communities.

Although the findings point to the powerful restricting impact that both macro and micro political and economic forces have on educational development and practice, opportunities for resisting their impacts seem to prevail in the local world of women. They have begun to 'define their own worlds' by adopting on the traditional values like equity, life-long and mutual accountability, applying them as underlying principles to redefine programmes in which equality, social justice and humanity are upheld. The fact that the elderly members of a literacy project in Moutse found the site for adult education a 'site for social interaction', while the facilitators perceived their role as a 'service', speaks to the traditional mores that have shaped educational development in the area. 'Social interaction' and 'service' in the community are not considered mere tasks or jobs but a 'way of life' in which the principle which says

‘the spirit in you makes me who I am ’, an ‘*ubuntu*’⁵ principle, motivates people to be part of political and educative processes. Adult basic education in this area is seen as part of the social fabric and is not separated from the culture and ways people are socialised to be responsible for others first and self last.

The study concludes that South African Adult Basic Education and Training needs to maintain a critical momentum, and also strive towards a meaningful transformative curriculum in which cultural traditions are recognised. It requires a curriculum which includes ‘really useful knowledge’ where learners can acquire a balanced understanding of who they are first as human beings and, second to acknowledge power within and among themselves, recognising also the influences of power beyond themselves. In this way, developmental energies among people can be directed towards ‘pro-active’ participation in social transformation.

⁵ The literal translation of the concept in Shona ‘unhu’ means collective personhood. In terms of African heritage it has emphasis on and concern for people, as well as on being a good person. It is not a racial or trivial concept and can find expression else where in the world beyond the confines of Africa. The key issue is collective survival and cooperation.

Chapter One

Current Perspectives of Adult Education and Social Change

Introduction

The first five years after the first democratic elections in 1994 have been a transitional period in South Africa. A number of challenges to the process of restructuring education emerged. These were challenges of an external nature resulting from the re-entry of South Africa into the global arena. International markets have opened and there are now opportunities for competition and co-operation at a global level. However, if South Africa aims to be among the forceful players in the world market, it needs to improve its productivity levels; adapt to the fast changing world of information technology, and improve its human resource capacity primarily through sound education and training policies and programmes.

Internally, there are challenges as the country advances to meet the multi-dimensional expectations of its citizens, the majority of whom had been legally excluded from full participation in the political and economic sectors on racial grounds. At a technical level, such challenges relate to the literacy levels of its people shown by the 20% illiteracy rate of adults above the age of twenty years (Statistics SA, 1996-1998). The chapter begins by acknowledging that during this period of change, the economy, employment, education and indeed “national attitudes” are undergoing radical changes. There is great determination to transform the country economically and socially. This chapter is concerned with the relevance of adult education to the processes of change.

The chapter examines the dialectic of education and change in society. The theoretical perspectives addressing the role and nature of education against the theories of literacy, empowerment and transformation are presented. In order to do this an historical analysis is adopted. This reflects upon the factors that influenced

educational changes in adult education and of the relationship between the politics of the theory and practices of adult education and indeed of capitalism. If education is to be an integral factor in state transformation, the role of the state in a changing society needs to be examined.

The Role of the State

Many theorists of education and social change address the ways in which ideologies are applied by the state during transition. The state can either mediate the tension between the forces of change and education or exacerbate it. Thus the main issue needs to be not only what education does in a changing society, but also how it is related to class, race and gender as well as to the distribution of economic power (Carnoy, 1990). For Carnoy, it is the relationship between education and the changing elements of class struggle that matter. He notes the significant role of education as an instrument of domination and as a template for replicating the structures of political and economic capitalism.

A number of theorists (Apple, 1982; 1996; Dale, 1982; Green, 1990; 1997) believe that it is characteristic of developing nations to make education a key to the apparatus of state control by supporting the agenda of the state. Education is, in these situations perceived as legitimising the capitalist modes of production. The resulting association of education with 'centralised power inevitably makes education a source of social and economic contradictions' (Carnoy, 1990:63). Such contradictions continue to be problematic for adult education in South Africa. In a transitional phase, it can be argued that there has to be acceptance that there will be centralised state control of education for purposes of producing a skilled workforce for the developing economy. Therefore, if education is an inseparable instrument of state policy, an inherent contradiction arises when new policies are to be put in place. One might ask to what purpose should the policies be deployed? Are they to be in the interest of education *per se* or in the interest of the state? Are the two complementary?

On the one hand the aim of education is to enable individuals to achieve their full potential, and develop the ability to form a critique of the society in which they live (Elias and Merriam, 1995). On the other, the attainment of exponential accumulation of capital, where education is in the service of the state, can lead to the situation where the gaps between the different social classes grow wider (Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Thompson, 1980). At the same time the various sectors like welfare, culture, health, labour have expectations upon the state to provide social services during transition. These sectors are most likely to compete for delivery in a competitive manner. Among the groups some of these sectors support the capitalist agenda, whereas others oppose it (Mbilinyi, 1980; Healy, 1983; Youngman, 1986, 2000).

In this competitive situation, it is difficult for some civic groups like teachers' unions, trade unions, youth associations, women's associations, church groups and the political parties to oppose the state support for a capitalist agenda openly. It is argued that these groups are now being marginalised within the government circles. As a result, they are unable to criticise the state and are thus perceived to be compromising their ideological positions.

Another contradiction in the state's role in a changing society is the presumed obligation to meet and fulfil the functions of the ruling class (Dale, 1982). If the interests of the capitalist ruling class are adopted by the state, then the state's ability to mediate change with other groups may be undermined. It can no longer be neutral, it must promote the interests of innovation within the context of production, productivity and profit. Its function therefore cannot be seen to be outside of itself as it is subject to fulfilling the agenda as defined by the ruling system. Of course, in any transitional phase, politics is not neutral – it plays a critical and influential role and is always tied to specific ideologies. Inevitably therefore, in a changing society education, as an integral part of the state, cannot be neutral (Bown, 1990). It is unusual for popular education to continue to have an effective voice once education

is controlled and directed by the state. Carnoy (1990) suggests that for popular education to be effective, participatory social relations must be developed beyond political confines. This calls for the state to diffuse power and to mobilise the involvement of democratic institutions in real decision making. There could be situations that call for what Carnoy (1990) terms 'counter hegemony' the current development of a working class intelligensia capable of standing their ground against the state.

During the apartheid era, adult basic education acted as one form of the counter hegemonic forces. The democratic civic institutions developed participatory social relations. These were unified for an ultimate objective which was to address the illiteracy problem in the country. Now, in the post-apartheid era, policies seem to be gradually moving away from the reconstruction and development values to support the processes of capital accumulation. Such deliberate shifts were evident after the reconstruction and development plan was altered and effectively replaced by a market-based macro economic policy known as Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) introduced in June 1996.

The basic assumption of GEAR is that as the economy grows employment will increase and thus there will be a reduction in levels of poverty. It was estimated that as South Africa enters the world market it will be competitive, fast growing and will create sufficient opportunities for work seekers in a growing labour force. It was envisaged that there would be 400,000 employment opportunities created by the year 2000 (Loots, 1998). All these would be brought about by a free market system. GEAR called for privatisation, fiscal discipline, trade liberalisation and mapped out an International Monetary Fund structural adjustment programme (Pape, 1998). The result was the cutback on education, and specifically adult education and pre-school education. Although the national budgetary allocation to education (22.8%) was the second highest after defence, much of it was absorbed by administrative costs. Overseas donors like Swedish International Development Agencies (SIDA), USAID and the Ford Foundation funded Adult Basic Education and Training. This move

from reconstruction and development to GEAR can be seen as a change from a revolutionary tradition altered by programmes that serve the agenda of financial institutions, similar to the changes that affected the educational policies in Tanzania after independence (Carnoy and Samoff, 1990).

After independence Tanzania adopted an education policy “Education for Self Reliance” which Samoff noted was inspiring and motivating but in practice it had some inconsistencies in the levels of participation at the national and local levels:

The incompatibility is evident because effective planning for major changes, which are rapid, centrally controlled while encouraging local participation are a tense process. The tendency in this process is that detailed analysis is sacrificed, and new policies are just a ‘national crusade’ with dedicated activists but selfless dedication (Samoff, 1990: 202).

This was the result of the shifting alliances among policy makers on what directions to follow (ibid:210). The experiences of Tanzania constitutes a warning against shallow analysis and superficial plans made without a detailed examination of the macro economic and political situation.

Therefore, it can be seen that conventional understandings of the relationship between educational policy options and the resource base of any particular state in the long term, will be irreconcilable unless planning is prioritised and thoroughly undertaken. The dissemination in the ‘third’ world of the ‘first’ world critics through the introduction of information technology is one of the main challenges which puts pressure on the type of policies that may be relevant regarding literacy needs in the ‘third’ world. This suggests that, due to the transformative nature of information technology, the relevance of all current analyses are at best provisional. With this in mind, Dale (1982) comments that generally the education policy options that the state selects are on the basis of what is available: to a great extent what is available determines what can or cannot be done. In order to try to meet the demands of both

the individuals in society and capitalist interests, a compromise is struck between what can be done and what may be feasible.

What can be achieved through education is constrained not only by the problems confronting it, but also by the nature of problems for tackling them (Dale, 1982:140).

The synergy between an educational role and the capitalist interest can be delineated from Apple's critique of the role of ideologies in a curriculum. He notes how the curriculum in schools reinforces capitalist ideologies because it is not neutral, and that, once education is transformed by efficient methods and professional emphasis, the curriculum actually makes educators politically neutral. Carnoy affirmed this observation:

Education as part of the State is therefore an expression of the consensual social mood also subject to conflict but a conflict which is acted out in the context of democratic decision making and individual choice as to how much and what kind of education and training to take (Carnoy cited by Apple, 1982:79).

A situation in Zimbabwe after independence illustrates the tension when professional standards are introduced as part of policy reviews. During the period 1979 to 1990 Zimbabwe attempted to create a more socially useful and liberating education system. After independence a three pronged approach to high school education was adopted. Firstly, there was the emphasis on a 'vocationally oriented' curriculum. Secondly, a new method of assessing formal qualifications was introduced and modified to meet the relevant and actual requirements of the economy. Thirdly, consideration was given to options which could be adapted as successful models in achieving educational transformation (Swartz, 1993). The lessons learned from the pilot scheme, (which were similar to those introduced in Kenya and Botswana), were that 'it was no longer clear whether vocationalisation is necessarily a better model than the academic model'. Zimbabwe had produced a low level, narrowly focused type of education, which was in effect a mirror image of higher level education from colonial times. Therefore, Taylor (1993) suggests that for any transformation to be

successful, debates on reform need to take into account the disparity between educational objectives and the requirements of the prevailing economic regime.

The Zimbabwean model suggests that an ideological base constructed by the state and that of the nation have to complement each other otherwise they will conflict. Yet these two sectors seldom have similar objectives. It can be seen from the above perspectives that in a period of change, education tends to be the key ideological apparatus of the state in reproducing capitalist modes of production (Althusser, 1971; Apple, 1996).

A related problem identified by the above theorists is the complex nature of organisations within the state itself. Generally, the state tends first, to be a bureaucratic, rational, and impersonal organisation and often masks the difference between what is 'government' and what is the actual 'state'. While the government is part of the state, it tends to adopt the operational format shaped by the goals of the state. Bureaucratic governments, tend to operate by adopting technological systems which impact upon the means of communication and interaction. These change to the dominant information techniques and technologies which, to a great extent, though more efficient, are impersonal. Governments rationalise the need for expertise and specialisation on the basis of social control and cost effectiveness. Emphasis is placed on expertise, knowledge, special skill acquisition and specialisation rather than on using 'popular' and common means of survival. As a result, bureaucrats recruit on the basis of qualifications, credentials and prior acquisition of expert skills.

Second, state organisations assume a hierarchical structure which tends to make them anti-democratic, detached from society, with focussed plans, integrated and characterised by debates of a technical nature rather than a concern with fundamental issues (Kallaway and Sieborger, 1990). One finds that the role of teachers, for example, diminishes or is subordinate to that of state. Employees of these organisations tend to follow regulations and keep the agenda of the state. There is a

constant move toward technocratic and technological management which replaces the politics of education with educational politics and thus makes education the 'site of consolidating capitalist legitimacy' (Apple and Dale, 1982). Forms of change suggested by the above authors provide parameters within which the changing educational structures and systems in South Africa can be understood. This changing framework will be developed in chapter four where adult education policy and practice will be discussed.

Social change therefore becomes an important consideration in any examination of education and adult basic education. Indeed, education is frequently seen as playing a central role in social change, but it is change which is dependent on the attitudes that practitioners hold. Thomas and Harries-Jenkins (1975) have suggested a model within which the varying attitudes of practitioners can be examined. The model begins by showing how the attitudes of practitioners manifest themselves in a continuum between conflict and a consensus of interests. The former represents group interests which may be in conflict, whereas consensus relationships can be seen when the interests of a society as a whole are prioritised. Whatever manifestation, the role of adult education may be ineffective depending on its position on the balance maintained in the continuum. The criticism of this theory is that the role of adult education among individuals and groups can only be effective if it enables them to challenge basic assumptions about socio-economic structures, value systems and cultural or aesthetic norms (Thomas and Harries-Jenkins, 1975).

The above theorists provide insights into the different roles that adult education can play and in turn determine the possible type of change in any society. They propose that growth in society and that societal advancement is measured by its literacy levels as well as by advancement in knowledge and continuing research. However this growth will be determined by the extent of, or whether there is, a conflicting relationship or a consensus among practitioners on the need for advancing literacy.

As society changes, the needs and desires of people in society change, and once there is an imbalance, further research must be conducted. Societies are motivated to engage in the process of acquiring a balance and moving to a new state of equilibrium. In these situations, consensus prevails between overall goals, needs and aspirations. The role of adult education and literacy in these circumstances is to follow policies that promote collective rather than particular group needs in society. Literacy provides a facility, a critical apparatus with which to question existing societal structures and practices.

Literacy may be seen fixed to a situation, however it may be adapted either as a revolutionary force to reform or it can be used to maintain the status quo by protecting traditional values. As a revolutionary force adult education is a means by which solutions to the problems in society can be delineated and achieved. In addition, it can be seen as a force that can help to move toward change. Societies are mobilised into action through various structures to exercise their moral and intellectual force over unacceptable practices like racial and gender inequalities, discrimination against physical disabilities or violations of human rights. Once needs are addressed, social cohesion and stability are envisaged, creating circumstances in which adult education can have a 'revolutionary' impact.

However, this is not the only function of adult education. Following from the Thomas and Harries-Jenkin's models, when adult education is not revolutionary, it can be seen to reinforce the status quo by maintaining the existing state of affairs. One of the core processes in educational reform assumes that change will follow a planned and integrated process underpinned by acceptable general values for the whole of society. In these circumstances very few sectional differences are anticipated and therefore there are limited debates on the values, content and rationale of adult education. Under these circumstances educational attainment tends to be in support of the primary wellbeing of society as a whole, and not of specific groups. This is because, generally, the reforms are pioneered by individuals or group

interests, a process seen as a 'symbiotic relationship between members of the interest groups' (Thomas and Harries-Jenkins, 1992:114).

The degree to which the status quo is maintained is perceived by these theorists as a 'maintenance model' of adult education. Generally this model is prevalent when interests of particular groups are maintained within a stable society. Most common is the interest of producing conformists, citizens who fit into the social order and thus maintain the status quo. This model can be considered the most extreme and conservative role of adult education. Anything that is innovative or encourages critical minds and revolutionary thought cannot be entertained or is marginalised. The focus of adult education under this approach would be to offer programmes that will maintain traditional subjects of study, for example, programmes like leadership training or acquisition of mental skills, without having or supporting, a broad perspective including the politics of change and power.

For example, the adult basic education programmes for mine workers in South Africa include reading and writing skills, and safety courses which although essential, have not inculcated critical understanding of ownership and capital power, or issues of productivity, exportation, value of minerals or economic emancipation. Such limited understandings show that education can help to reinforce the traditional and established order. However, another 'reading' of adult education it is argued, it can contribute to the liberation of both men and women (Bernard and Geyfer, 1992). Yet it can also be argued that the role of adult education in South Africa, has had some effects which seem to fit into the revolutionary and reform continuum. During the early 1970s, adult education was part of the revolutionary movement to the extent that it empowered men and women to influence the state to consider what kind of education was needed for adults. The latter half of 1980 until 1992 was a period of political transformation, which was achieved in 1994. The details of these varied forms of adult education are discussed lengthily in chapter three.

In the light of the foregoing discussion there seems to be a fine line between the role of adult education and the role of literacy and how each of these relate to a changing society, individually or collectively. New Literacy theorists, whose work has gained prominence in South Africa especially prior to the period of democratic change, attempted to address the relationship between literacy and its application in relation to the emerging needs of society. This was a period following on the era when the nation had come to understand the inequities of educational provision for adults. Literacy programmes had begun and the debates were mainly about the use or usefulness of literacy in an emerging nation.

Social uses of Literacy

The New Literacy theorists, (Street, 1984; Barton, 1994; Barton and Hamilton, 1998) have advanced arguments which challenge what can be considered “traditional” literacies. A “traditional” conception views literacy as simply the ability or an ‘automatic’ ability to read and write from learning, whereas “New Literacy Theorists” (also known as Critical discourse theorists), extend literacy to the ability to interpret the world. A definition of literacy in their school of thought is that:

Literacy is primarily something people do; it is an activity, located in the space between thought and text. Literacy does not just reside in people’s heads as a set of skills to be learned, and does not just reside on paper, captured as text to be analysed. Like all human activity, literacy is essentially social, and it is located in the interaction between people (Barton and Hamilton, 1998:3).

It can be deduced from this that the New Literacy theorists represent a ‘social’ view of literacy rather than a psychological or cognitive one. Literacy is defined as ‘a means of representing the world to ourselves and others’ (Street, 1995). There are two points to be considered in understanding this approach. First, the world is interpreted through words (Freire and Macedo, 1987) which means interpretation is dependent on the meaning of a continuous process of ‘writing’ and ‘re-writing’ the world. This leads to the second point; whether the meanings will actually be context

bound or can they be derived independently of the context and thereby lead to other forms of knowledge and understanding?

In considering the two points above, writers in literacy as a social construct, were particularly interested in how texts (not just on paper) but the day to day practices or events, fit into the practices of people's lives (Barton and Hamilton, 1998). In this model, literacy helps learners translate their knowledge into social practices with which they can manage their world and construct complex ideas of the world. In rural areas of South Africa, one may ask, how do illiterate women find meaning of their own world, what 'texts' do they use and does acquisition of literacy skills enhance their already existing knowledge.

Another writer warns against the presumptions about the uses of literacy among policy makers – there being a group who see a strong relationship between literacy and power; where 'literacy is a commodity or a set of social practices deeply embedded in power relations' (Kell, 1994:174). Kell was sceptical about this presumption and noted that empowerment cannot simply be achieved in programmes of learning by providing opportunities for learning literacy and numeracy, especially if the medium of learning is foreign. Her concern was to challenge the idea that South Africa needs literacy because it is a 'good thing', and that therefore many people would want to be literate.

Her research, an ethnographic study of people from informal settlements in South Africa, focused upon how people perceive and actually use literacy. The subjects of the research were in either the beginners' class or in the advanced literacy level. The learners were observed over a period of six months. They all attended 'night school' classes conducted in the early evenings. She conducted the observation on the assumption that literacy is seen as the foundation for the formal ABET system, a foundation allowing learners access to further education. People would attend literacy courses before moving into further education.

Her findings suggest that a particular type of literacy, 'schoolled' literacy, was being promoted in night schools, and on the whole did not articulate with other 'communal' literacies in the community. It became clear with time that learners were not using their learning in any field outside 'night schools'. Opportunities for relating what they learned and what they did daily, were minimal. Learning only happened in school, and was not related to people's lives, making literacy practices isolated. She cautioned that 'it was not possible to be sure that some transfer of knowledge was not happening' (Kell, 1994:177) and suggested further research.

The discourse on the use of language and literacy, as the means of changing power relations in society, raises questions about methodology and purposes of literacy teaching and learning. Commonly, the conventional means of communication through literacy are identified as the media, books and magazines. People need to be able to understand the powerful ways in which written language is used so that they in turn can use language effectively to challenge those in control of the print medium. At another level, literacy can be used as the powerful means for reflecting, creating and sustaining or changing power relations in society. So the use of literacy, is about learning skills in a context, knowing the conventions, knowing who holds power and how it is used or abused. The applications of literacy therefore vary according to people's experiences, cultural contexts and values. Therefore literacy use is multiple (Kell, 1994). One may argue that the varied literacy backgrounds, including oral traditions among South Africans, support Kell's observations.

Other researchers have explored the value of experiences and the cultural context within which they are located. Work on women's education has concentrated on issues of empowerment and change. Thus, at this point it is relevant to examine empowerment perspectives, to discuss the merits of adult education as an empowering process.

There are several schools of thought on the concept and practice of 'empowerment'. Some psycho-analytic schools begin at an individualistic level by focusing on the

changed behaviour of individuals in response to stimuli or changing conditions; the ability to do something different because of learning, for example. Others focus on structural conditioning which effects changes among systems, changes that can be either internal or external. Above all, empowerment refers to a process that achieves desired change, as was the active advancement of the political liberation in South Africa, but sometimes change can be unconsciously attained.

One of the schools of thought is advanced by Youngman (1986) who adopts a three-way perspective on adult education and empowerment. His article, based on women's empowerment, describes the conservative, radical and the alternate views to empowerment. The conservative view is one in which the acquisition of literacy skills refers to the simple use of letters and words. It is a very traditional view, based on a very mechanical form of learning with inherent rigidity. This form of learning lacks comprehension of the relationship between what adults learn and their living circumstances. It is thus a limited individualistic approach, which makes assumptions that acquisition of reading and writing on its own helps people to improve life and therefore feel automatically empowered.

The radical view postulates that there is a relationship between literacy, organisation and political mobilisation. Youngman's definition of the radical viewpoint is based on the premise that an assertive disposition results from literacy awareness. Adults learn and acquire skills and thus become empowered when they acquire new forms of knowledge that make them act differently. They are empowered when they are able to understand the world and develop the urge to change it. The historical account of adult education in South Africa (to be elaborated in chapter three) provides evidence of how acquisition of basic knowledge equipped people to understand their rights and to struggle for them. In this sense it can be said that it was an empowering process during which authentic forms of 'reading' history and 'writing' the future plans for political liberation were developed without the use of actual reading and writing (Freire and Macedo, 1987). Instead of 'formal education'

programmes, political liberation education was disseminated through overt and covert discussions through art, drama and music.

Youngman's alternate view highlights issues of power relations within structures in societies and within institutions. Once the issues are isolated and analysed, people become enlightened and achieve self-discovery. With this approach it was assumed that adult education for women in South Africa for example, would equip them with knowledge to change the oppressive patriarchal system that discriminated against them. In order to change the system women would organise themselves, describe the gender roles and work on strategies to change any forms of subordination. This could happen privately through families, and publicly through legal, political organisations and trade unions.

Empowerment can be seen as both a goal, that is, a desired state and also as a method, an agent of change (Kaufman, 1997). According to Kaufman, empowered participation can be measured in societies in which people control the means of political, economic, cultural and social power. Through this a goal is achieved. On the other hand, an empowered process is in evidence when people develop a voice with which to express their needs and means to solve their problems. In this way a method is noted. They may have common interests and a united aim to express their felt needs and thus harness their latent energies to seek a way forward. Lovett (1971) cited an example of how mothers empowered themselves by tackling personal issues of concern, for example abortion, drug addiction, divorce and teenage life through group discussions. He concluded that adult education was used as a method by which parents found ways of helping themselves. This meant that the discussions provided a forum through which solutions to their problems were sought.

Another example in which a literacy goal was achieved, was the use of historical experiences. This was seen in the successful National Literacy Crusade in Nicaragua that began in 1979. In six months, March to August 1980, Nicaragua succeeded in vastly reducing the 50% illiteracy rate. The strength of their strategy was that

besides articulating their political and pedagogical goals they did not alter the military structures the foundation of their historical strength. They engaged the armed forces, organised them into literacy fronts and called them the Peasant Literacy Armies or Urban Literacy Guerrillas. The foundation of this Literacy Crusade was based on the historical experiences and existing structures with which the Nicaraguans were already familiar. Within a year the illiteracy rate dropped to 11.8% (Alemayehu, 1988).

Many adult educators have acclaimed the success of the literacy campaign in Nicaragua (Hall and Kidd, 1978). As a case example, the successes from Nicaragua can show the gaps in the evolution of adult education in South Africa. New structures have been set up for the ABET programme instead of adapting what already exists. Although the political campaigns in South Africa after 1976 were focussed and goal oriented, the ABET strategy did not build on the historical experiences as the literacy fronts in Nicaragua had done. People had developed the capacity to act on their initiatives, but they had been acting outside the systems of economic power and control – largely in non-government, community or in labour movements. In other words, popular education fell short of the ‘alternative’ aspect noted in Youngman’s empowerment theory. In addition, such forms of empowerment leads one to question whether any form of participation such as a mothers’ group, makes people feel they have ‘real’ power: should they use adult education and aim beyond empowerment. It also raises questions as to whether empowerment is the same as emancipation.

Emancipation is considered as an alternative form of empowerment which can be realised within systems and structures of power (Inglis, 1997). In other words, Inglis considers this approach different to the psychoanalytic school’s approach. Although Inglis is not explicit about what forms of power he is referring to, he discusses the nature of power specifically as it manifests itself beyond the confines of individual empowerment. He suggested that for real power to be realised successfully, it has to be understood in its magnitude, its effects and its operation. Although it is power

from within, it does not only originate within, it is power everywhere and does not come from a single source, (Foucault in Inglis, 1997) and manifests itself in action. Empowerment begins also with the realisation that in order to better effect change, it seems more strategic to begin from within, an 'inside out' process so that an understanding of ideologies and cultures of organisations is achieved.

It can be inferred from above discussions that, although individual empowerment can be acquired through learning, emancipation requires a personal qualitative shift affecting socio-political, economic and cultural relations. Inglis (1997) would argue that until adult education moves from a discourse of power to a discourse about the nature, character, control and purpose of power, it will not be emancipatory. The South African adult education movement was enlightening and enabling for those who participated. They could see and understand the might of state power but the pertinent question remains whether the movement enabled the participants to understand the discourse about the nature, the character and purpose of the powerful forces which controlled them. More specifically, was adult education empowering for women?

A number of reasons can be given for the limitations in the adult education processes particularly those that impact on women's empowerment. Change happens at a fast rate and with it are other forces determined beyond people's local domains. These dynamics tend to be quicker than the processes of conceptualising and attaining consensus on the ultimate goal of adult education - especially when there is greater pressure on flexible ways of communicating and adapting to new changes. However it may be possible to be adapt if communities use what Habermas (1991) refers to as 'communicative action' as distinct from 'strategic action'. Communicative action calls for people to have control of their own lives and to shape their own world. Once they begin to ask questions about the type of future society they want to live in, they engage in an emancipatory process. This is important for an understanding of adult basic education in South Africa especially in how it impacts on the lives of

women in rural areas whose change processes may tend to be slower than those in urban areas.

‘Strategic action’ according to Habermas (1991) tends to explain the rationale and structures of programmes, their parameters, limitations and management capacities. Within these structures can be overt or hidden ideologies that can either hinder or encourage development. At times the power of ideologies renders ‘communicative action’ futile especially if there is no understanding of the inter-connectedness of the powers controlling their destiny. During the past thirty years, for example, apartheid, the ideology of racial division, was supported by Christian values. Christianity was thus in alliance with the aims of apartheid: it had indoctrination built into the education system. Apartheid was a political ideology that promoted obedience and conformity to an extent that religion and education became complementary means for maintaining law and order. Law and order have been racist and oppressive practices justified by religious ethics in South Africa.

Although apartheid has ended, it is still important for adult education to defend its terrain and moral purpose. Habermas (1991) proposed a culture of maintaining self-direction, a willingness to defend one’s autonomy from disabling imperatives, and a culture of reclaiming valuable community-oriented directives. An example of this could be the collective culture that keeps people together through the use of ‘local languages’. With local understanding, people are enabled to suggest feasible and realistic solutions. This process will be discussed in the third chapter on the historical development of adult education in South Africa. However, Habermas assumes that those in communication share a common understanding about what the goals are; that they can adhere to moral imperatives based on socialist ideologies of fighting for the betterment of all. The relevance of the ‘theory of communication’ therefore, leads to many questions. One question is whether the perceived goals of adult basic education are similarly understood by the planners, practitioners and learners. Further, is there an equal relationship among those involved? Finally, one

must ask, whether there is universal interest in emancipation and justice for those who were disadvantaged by the political system of the past?

A further elaboration of Habermas' (1991) 'strategic action' is suggested that emancipation is not only knowing who is in control, but also in an understanding of how power rules over people (Mayo, 1997). She makes a distinction between processes of understanding power, its location and how its impact can be challenged. Two strategies, not mutually exclusive, are suggested: first the analysis of power, and second the development of critical understanding. In the former people must know the location of power, understand its impact, its outcomes or results as well as its 'non-decision making' effects. A critical understanding should provide knowledge about the source of power as distinct from its location, the nature and extent of power, its alliances and its limitations. People can be enabled to challenge power, resist it and reject influences, but if they lack the ability to transform the basis of power relations then emancipation is still a dream.

The foregoing discussion highlights the important fact that empowerment, emancipation and transformation are inherently intertwined. The liberation movement in which women were involved was empowering. Transformation, an envisaged goal in the new political dispensation, forms the main thrust in the educational plans. Beyond this, therefore, the concern is for a new education system a new adult education system which does address real transformation in terms of equity, redress and gender equality. In the case of educating women in rural areas of South Africa, considerations come to be seen as crucial to an understanding of their participation in and relationship to their learning programmes.

In terms of South African educational policy, transformation is a premise from which 'lifelong learning is an integrated system of education and training' (White Paper, 1995:2). It is a system in which there should be no divisions between 'theory' and 'practice' but which creates a framework in which learners can acquire knowledge that facilitates movements within the levels of education. Thus learning

will be assessed by evaluating how knowledge is applied. In other words, once learners have acquired, assimilated and become enabled to apply knowledge, it should be possible to determine the extent to which learners are able to transform as individuals, and also be effective in their environments.

Such assumptions raise a number of questions: what 'a transformed' learner is, how knowledge is defined, who defines it and for what purpose is knowledge perceived to be relevant or useful. One example defining knowledge is that:

Knowledge is a human construction that by definition has a human purpose. Knowledge cannot be sterile or neutral in its conception, formulation and development. Humans are not generally renowned for their neutrality or sterility. The generation and development of knowledge is thus contextual in nature. In today's world it is even harder to entertain this concept of 'its own sake'. It may be misunderstood as being insensitive or out of touch with reality. This must not be confused with knowledge that has immediate application, or that knowledge always has to produce tangible or visible applications. The direct linking of knowledge with application is equally dangerous. Knowledge may for example lead to understanding and better appreciation of processes of matters of nature. Understanding is a critical purpose in human existence. Knowledge production may lead to more knowledge being generated and at times opening unexpected findings or being immediately applicable. So knowledge for understanding and generating more knowledge is just as vital as knowledge with tangible applications (Makgoba 1997:177).

It is suggested therefore that, knowledge is an entity with a purpose that may not be understood for its immediate applicability only, but also for its fuller explanation of the world in which people must function. It is thus a powerful means of making sense of the world, a process that may be cognitive or practical. In this way it is not a neutral process, but a continuous social and context-bound process. Knowledge is manifest through words, language, symbols, impressions as well as actions, all of which can be understood differently in different contexts. For example, art is an expression of knowledge, it is purposeful and can be understood in many more ways than the artist envisaged. Leadership and responsibility is another form of knowledge which, for example in rural communities, can be learnt from taking care of cattle. In

other contexts individuals are trained through a programme using written texts. In the former mode, there is no written language to read, but language in actions, gestures and the creation of relationship between the cattle and the carer. Although the same type of knowledge is acquired through different modes of learning, it is notable that knowledge is not static, nor are the skills acquired static. Knowledge and skills continue to change in form and nature and can be adapted according to circumstances. Therefore 'transformative' adult education presents a number of considerations as far as the content of adult education is concerned. A suggestion by Mezirow (1990) is that a transformative adult education programme should be a set of activities which

- Provide conditions for reflection;
- Have critical reasoning;
- Have vision of a reflective learning society and
- Provide the foundations for a philosophy of adult education (Mezirow, 1990).

Considering that transformation is one of the envisaged goals of ABET ⁶ in South Africa, is it doubtful whether ABET succeeds in creating the opportunity to participate meaningfully in one's own world whether locally or globally. It is envisaged that transformative education will make people acquire critical minds and a critical awareness which enables learners to contribute to meaningful, socio-political and economic transformation (ABET, Policy, 1997). Perhaps, what is suggested in the policy is that 'transformation' will be measured by the level of readiness among South Africans if and when their literacy abilities begin to match the global competitive standards. However, adult education cannot be transformative if it merely enables learners 'to do something', to apply knowledge in different contexts and only to contribute to the economic growth of the country, not their own understanding of emancipation.

At the same time, South Africa faces major challenges in re-entry into the global market place. In order to compete with world competitors, particularly in the 21st

⁶ See ABET definition in the Introduction page 2.

century, a skilled work force is a prerequisite. This may be so because projections into the 21st century lead one to think that advanced technology and communication skills will polarise nations into 'skilled' and 'unskilled' groupings.

The future era in Mayo's (1997) opinion, will be characterised by an increasing polarisation of values caused by advanced technology and communication. It is argued that, the increasing power of globalisation is a form of control whereby the strong economies are succeeding in coercing most nations to align themselves to the global markets (Mayo, 1997). Yet the effects of globalisation cut across nations and create very limited opportunities to think of implications because adaptation to changing technology happens at a fast and uneven rate.

The pressures of globalisation have the potential to disintegrate human relationships and erode traditional economic systems. If globalisation is to be addressed, a holistic view of local economic development should be the starting point (Mayo, 1997:26).

Such conditions warrant a climate and opportunity to question the effects of world-wide globalisation and how human beings respond to it. Nonetheless, Mayo (1997) holds the opinion that adult education has a potential role in a fast changing world. She begins by pointing out that adult education has great potential to transform society. It also has consequences for the empowerment of individuals. However, in practice adult education can be seen either as reinforcing the market-related agenda or supporting social justice (Mayo, 1997).

In Mayo's analysis, market-related aims encourage free market principles whereby economic growth depends on individual decisions, choices and performances. Educational programmes based on these principles, focus on training and skills for specific jobs, or on skills that are demanded by the market. They focus on competencies for specific job functions and do not enhance or develop life skills that people already have. Training programmes that are for specific skills and competencies may not be transferable, and therefore may narrow the scope for other

experiences. In this way, skills acquired specifically for work purposes do not necessarily enable individuals to understand the purpose of their human existence. They may not transfer knowledge acquired or apply it to their day to day living circumstances.

The model relating to social justice that Mayo (1997) proposes suggests that adult education aims at a holistic national liberation and radical social change. In this way transformation is seen as a process, not an end in itself. She suggests that inclusive participation of the wider community should be encouraged, implying that an attempt is made to include people from all ranks of the community. Adult education thus aims at avoiding discriminatory practices, so that those who were discriminated against throughout history, the deprived, oppressed and exploited, are given space to participate.

Once practitioners in the field of adult education are aware of this dichotomy, adoption of approaches and strategies to transformation may be encouraged. A supportive opinion by Walters (1997) suggests that while there is recognition that technological and global forces are unavoidable, there is nothing wrong in looking simultaneously at new and alternative forms of social production. In other words, a distinction must be made between knowledge with a moral cause and just purpose vis-à-vis the overemphasis on technical expertise.

This conscious process may take the type of 'development that can integrate regional or local policies into the national systems' (Walters, 1997). Progress will be evaluated by the extent to which societies meet their social needs and promote social justice. Those wishing to play a role in adult education should be aware of competing economic and educational forces, and their implications, and evaluate both. Both Mayo (1997) and Walters (1997) suggest that on the basis of evaluating the opportunities and the threats, and of an understanding of globalisation, adult educators can make choices. Such choices also determine the extent to which people

in society can be empowered and enabled to participate with more influence on the direction of the developments in their life plans.

In other words, the pursuit of economic goals is an important aspect of transformation, and, at the same time, adult education can still be considered as a tool with which societies can be transformed. This is a challenge as it presents a dichotomy which will be discussed in the following paragraphs: whether, indeed choices should be made between pursuit of personal, social transformation or economic development. These goals of personal, social and economic development were addressed in different strategies, as South Africa faced monumental change. In order to examine the concept of transformation the next section will discuss the various perspectives underlying the forms of adult education in relation to the type of knowledge to be acquired in adult education and training programmes.

Adult education for Transformation or Economic Development

It has been suggested in the preceding sections that adult education can be politically and socially transformative if the right strategies are found and adopted. The reconstruction, development and transformation programmes considered education and indeed adult education central. Yet, it is not easy to prioritise education for political participation and social consciousness on the one hand, and formal academic and technical education on the other. Considerations for educational planning require that the aims be clearly spelt out so that the programmes can be made relevant to different contexts. The participatory and liberating aims of adult education seek to increase equality of access to knowledge with which people can transform society. It is assumed that in many societies transformation can be measured by high levels of understanding and the increase in literacy capacities which, in turn, may improve productive capacities. These abilities, it is assumed, increase the opportunities and possibilities for people to become more involved in the world around them. This is mainly if people are able to perceive the

opportunities which are available for them and respond to the challenges these opportunities offer.

Although the political changes provide opportunities for an emerging economy, the low skill levels and high illiteracy in South Africa work against what may be achieved. In order to compete with world competitors, a skilled work force is a prerequisite, especially in the period of information technology. This is particularly so in South Africa described by Turok as being a country with a 'skyscraper economy – surrounded by shanty towns' in which the government's policies and budgets are designed to protect the interests of a small elite (Turok, 1995). Instead of adopting a fixed education and reconstruction agenda with rigid targets but instead adapting to the policies and programmes which may have failed in other countries, Turok (1995) suggests there is a need in South Africa to look simultaneously at new and alternative educational plans. This includes knowledge of a moral and practical kind, but also a '*middle point*' or '*alternative positions*' as (van Rensburg, 1980) noted where knowledge of moral and practical use is interspersed. In this way people can develop an understanding of different ways to develop knowledge of a critical and technical nature.

An example of such knowledge is the Swaneng Hill Case Study, in which van Rensburg took an 'alternative position', when he introduced a secondary school education course. A declaration was made that it was a socialist development course. Its purpose and aim was to 'examine the economic, social and political problems with which the students would understand the skills required for responsible citizenship' (Taylor, 1974). The first processes of learning included a discussion with students about their society, its economy and a radical analysis of that society. The course discouraged elitism among students at Swaneng Hill. The syllabus included economic pre-history, politics, economic development and industrialisation, social and cultural change specific to the student's own country. At the managerial level, authoritarianism was reduced, students were given roles and more responsibility to encourage initiative, reliability and self-reliance. The school was characterised by

‘staff participation rather than staff democracy’ allowing much open debate on school policy (Taylor, 1974:133).

At a socio-political level it is important to refer to the ‘alternative position’ as suggested by van Rensburg. He rejected the notion that education is a vehicle of privilege. His reform programme of secondary education was based on a commitment to social justice among the educated, to equip them with knowledge and skills for development. In many ways, he saw this as a socialist-based education. Although van Rensburg was concerned about the education model (described above) in the late 1978s, his ideas were reinforced by Rodrik (1999) twenty years later when he examined the role of culture in strategic thinking in Botswana.

The latter, more interested in economic strategies, illustrated how, at an economic level, an ‘alternative strategy’ could, in Botswana, include traditional, cultural and educational agenda by encouraging a balanced and open attitude to the global market. The ‘alternative strategy’ is regarded as a policy, less orthodox than policies in some spheres of its economy, which significantly recognises its culture and its people. Botswana draws much of its profit from export trade in diamonds, although diamonds by themselves are not sufficient. The export of diamonds is free of government interference. The government restricted tax on exports and encouraged free trade practices. It does not control the revenue from these exports, but receives a share of the customs revenue collected from imports. Botswana has the reputation of a stable, trustworthy and competent democracy. Internally, it has a very large public sector and government involvement in welfare and educational provision. Although government expenditure is above 50% public investment, subsidies make up to 40 – 50% of these expenditures.

Harvey (1992) pointed out that, in addition to the participation of the public sector the leadership in Botswana was grounded on traditional cultures, which still valued cattle or livestock as status symbols as well as of monetary value.

The government was seen to:

emphasise the strong influence of rural exporters on economic policy. A large majority of politicians and senior government officials in Botswana own cattle, and an even higher proportion are related to people who own cattle. Their income from cattle comes mostly from exporting (Rodrik 1999: 360).

What distinguishes Botswana from other countries is the quality of its state intervention, which endeavours to guarantee civil liberties and maintain traditional and cultural values in economic development strategies.

There is logical common ground between van Rensburg's 'middle point' and both Turok's and Rodrik's arguments for 'alternative' strategies in education. They all agree that integration into the world economy in and of itself will not necessarily improve economic performance. However, a 'middle point' could be arrived at, if the countries sought to improve their internal institutions and avoid conflict management. They must guarantee civil liberties and maintain the social and civil partnerships. This is an approach that Rodrik (1999) calls the 'domestic development strategy'. It is a strategy that allows for global openness with a well-formulated domestic investment strategy to start economic growth.

However, the reality in South Africa is that the public and policy makers are struggling with the impacts of the forces of globalisation. Advancement in technology and technological communications have effected huge shifts in wealth production. Global trends are a challenge to South Africa which is trying to find a niche in the international competitive arena. Some economically advanced countries have made gains out of globalisation through improved production and enhanced efficiencies. Importation and exchange of goods, ideas, technology and access to foreign savings have been accelerated to an extent that jobs were created in these countries. Yet such opportunities come with risks of inequalities, instabilities and marginalisation which are heightened by economic inequalities (Rodrik, 1999). The concern in a country like South Africa, and particularly for women in rural

communities, is how to strike a balance between ‘domestic development’ and increasing the capacity to reach the standards required for international trade.

The point to be recognised from the example in Botswana is the stability of the socio-economic plan. It is a plan that encourages accumulation of capital value attached to farming, in which citizens have maintained traditional practices while remaining open to international developments. The economic strategy upholds respect and maintenance of peaceful civil society through meaningful consultation with “stakeholders”⁷ be they the local community or the international trade community. Considering that transformation is one of the envisaged goals of adult education in South Africa, it is problematic how it will succeed in creating the opportunity described above, either an opportunity in which meaningful consultation with stakeholders is upheld, or an inter-disciplinary approach to economic and educational goals is endorsed. It can be argued that in conceptualising its adult education policies South Africa must adopt an approach that recognises cultural, political and social conditions, or it may fall short of economic transformation.

Summary

This chapter has examined the role of the state in a changing society. In addition it has focused upon the role of adult education and the interpretation of its empowering potential. Also discussed were the values and purposes of various forms of knowledge. It was demonstrated that knowledge is not only relevant if put to use, but also empowering by its nature in terms of the social environments from which it is acquired. This supposition derives from the New Literacy theorists who suggest that the utility of knowledge is context and culture bound. In the South African context this is particularly important because of the values attached to some cultural

⁷ Stakeholders: is a term used to refer to primary and important representative(s) members in any structure. It can refer to an individual or a group of people who have a ‘say’ or ‘a stake’ in the issues at hand.

traditions whereby learning or education begins from one's own environment and one's community.

All these constructs were discussed in relationship to change in society. The first section pointed to the role of ideology in a changing society showing that any society going through change has conflicting ideologies that have a bearing on the type of educational reforms that are instituted. In reality the state can develop either a conflict model or promote consensus. At the same time, it was illustrated that the political ideology of the state is never neutral.

In a changing society, the state diffuses the power of the civil movement as it takes on central decision making. However, it has been illustrated by Carnoy (1990) that people's education can be effective if social relations are developed beyond political domains. When this happens it is important that the 'counter hegemony' is maintained (Carnoy, 1990). But how does any society maintain its radical momentum when there are no shared goals? This is a problematic issue when the goals of the state are seen to legitimise the capitalist agenda, when legitimisation depends on education as part of its machinery.

The perceived value of the use of education is, indeed, related to the contradictory tensions described in this chapter. One assumption is that economic growth leads to social development, particularly if supported by a literate society. Literacy is therefore perceived as a tool by which transformation can be achieved. It is further assumed that as people acquire specific kinds of knowledge, attitudes change and functional skills develop so they will be in a better position to make meaningful contributions to their lives. Another view is that the utility of knowledge is context bound and culturally specific. It is suggested that it is difficult to predetermine the utility of knowledge, but it may be better to maintain a balance with which education can be applied to relevant use. Thus, Mayo (1997) and Walters (1997) warn that transformation is only possible if education does not only follow market-related

models with emphasis on skills mainly demanded by the job market, but endeavour to find alternate forms of responding to global forces.

Alternative forms of education were also endorsed by van Rensburg (in Taylor 1974; Walters, 1997; and Rodrik, 1999). They suggested that educational planning should adopt knowledge of a moral and practical kind. Rodrik's example in Botswana highlights the value of keeping and appreciating cultural traditions in strategic plans for economic growth.

In the next chapter, feminist issues will be discussed to show how the agenda for women's emancipation is linked to this socio-political processes of change. It is argued that in the field of adult education, feminist debates continue to be central to the concerns of women. They discuss who and for whom adult education becomes an empowering vehicle. The issues of emancipation, central to this thesis, are important because the liberation struggle reflects the concerted participation of women throughout. However, the literature on the struggle is silent on the role of women. Indeed, in the 'new' ABET plans, an ambivalent position on women's concerns is evident. This silence and ambivalence about women's roles can be understood by examining the debates in the feminist discourse.

Chapter Two

Feminist Debates and Women's Movement

Introduction

This chapter links adult education and culture with the impact of adult education on the position of women. The definitions and sources of feminist understandings which, to a great extent are determined by the form of education to which women and men are exposed, will be outlined and analysed.

The first section of the chapter will discuss the conflicting views in the feminist discourse. In the second section some examples of how the tensions manifest themselves in the position and educational status of women in the South African context will be cited.

Approaches to Feminism

It is too simplistic to suppose that the socially constructed relationship among people can be explained from either a theoretical or a practical point of view only. Some feminists' writings are heavily based on theoretical conceptions while others begin from the practical experiential point of view. Miller (1989) regarded feminist literature as falling into distinct yet opposite spheres, classified as the psycho-historical versus epistemological viewpoints. The former is based on psychoanalysis and historical changes in the nurturing conditions of women, whereas the latter concentrates on knowledge itself. Miller observes that the tensions between the psychological vis-à-vis practical epistemologies are irresolvable and will always have contradictions. While there are many theories and approaches in women's emancipation, she does not believe that one can theorise on the grounds of feminist practice alone. The South African context and the women's movement is an

interesting situation because although race was a divisive force, women tended to engage in strategies that were 'above' gender, race or class.

Similar analyses were observed by Elaine Marks (in Hirsch and Keller, 1990) who observed a dichotomy in what she labelled 'working papers' versus 'position papers'. Such polarisation, she noted, is unfortunate because it separates women into the 'thinkers' and 'doers'. It perpetuates the debates about the origin and authenticity of information instead of encouraging a collaborative process that Miller calls 'a feminist scholarship'. Both Miller and Marks tried to reflect upon their work and experience. In 1985, Miller suggested that women should continue working on women's issues. Although she was not sure of alternative approaches, she criticised the simplistic way of dividing feminists into 'thinkers' and 'doers'. This she argued, concealed the complications relating to feminism (Miller quoted in Hirsch and Keller, 1990).

In South Africa, inequitable distribution of educational resources and finance have given white women privileges to be the 'thinkers', lead research and document the plight of women. Often, feminist writing was by white women about black women, especially reflecting on domination in the 'domestic' spheres. Although there was domination of women by men among 'whites', there has been very limited writing on this. In a sense, the feminist writing was limited and not representative of stark realities faced by all women. Such distorted perceptions were experienced not only in South Africa, but within the feminist movement world-wide.

In the late 1980s a conference was organised by Teresa de Lauretis and Elizabeth Weed in the United States. It created a platform for a critical review of how feminist literature is written and perceived. Both in academic situations and interpersonal interactions the writers on feminism had been challenged on what they presented as 'sacred truths'. It was argued that academic writings lacked depth. There were cases

of such accusations among 'academia' versus the 'illiterate', 'white' feminists against 'black feminists', 'western intellectuals' versus 'so-called third world' feminists. Sharp polarisations were evident at that conference; factions and splits among feminists and the issue of race surfaced painfully (Miller, 1989).

It was further argued that the western intellectual tradition in general, was influenced by a male perspective and this was considered as evidence that it would impact upon the perspectives that western feminists adopted in their analysis and writings. Therefore, although the origin of information lay with the people for whom the theory was written, it was written from an already biased perspective. It was perceived as male-biased. As a result of these observations, feminist writers changed their perceptions about how knowledge was formed. The conference served as a turning point on the perceptions that feminist writers and researchers held about 'the others'. New thoughts and theories began to surface.

Another direct critique of the western approach was presented by Goetz (1991) who attacked western feminists for identifying themselves as reference points for the rest of the world. Goetz's opinion is that western feminists not only failed to pinpoint the sources of women's oppression; they also failed to realise how restrictive and obstructing governments could be in marginalising the concerns of women. She further discussed the feminist theories of knowledge based on the 'cultural relativist' model and based on the 'post-modernist' epistemology. The former asserts that women have subjective qualities and have particular characteristics and peculiarities and the latter model dismantles normative universalism (Goetz, 1991). Goetz proposed different approaches for feminism if it is to focus on women in development. The starting point should be the recognition that there is great diversity among women. She argued that theorists should consider factors of structural oppression and psychological oppression. She classified the western context as a 'welfarist approach' founded on the assumption that women are innately subordinate.

As a result of this women are:

solely recipients of development benefits because their primary role is the reproductive function in the family, while the man's role is productive.... This approach, common in colonial times, dominated the United Nations assistance through the 1960s going hand in hand with modernisation theory (Snyder et al, 1995:8).

This was a period of increasing population growth and strategies to decrease numbers were sought by the United Nations Development Programmes worldwide. Because women were seen primarily as 'home producers' dependent on the welfare of the state(s) the increase in number of children born was of concern to the world development agencies. In response to this demeaning attitude, welfare feminists assumed that people of the same gender were homogenous and thus could form an international constituency through whom models or approaches to women's issues could be formulated. Welfare feminists, therefore formulated models to follow the blueprint and fit into the agenda of development agencies without addressing women's problems and prevailing situations. Women were the first targets and 'some of the programmes that were adopted did not take cognisance of women's health and conditions' (Snyder et al, 1995:9). Dominant development approaches at the time did not fit the feminists' strategies.

The United Nations' declaration of the Women's Decade came about through women's pressure from the 'North' to incorporate women from the 'South'. The former had previously assumed and made 'claims to knowledge' about 'third world' women's issues. Examples of these were the population development policies, fertility management programmes and proposals for women in development (Meena, 1992). Although the proposals advocated the inclusion of women the 'weakness in the approach was that its thrust was to factor women in as the means of production' (Meena, 1992: 20). Decisions that affected their lives were made on their behalf and not negotiated by themselves. The issue still remains whether in the new democracy,

women can have direct influence on the decisions affecting their education or not and, if not, how is the feminist agenda for South African women determined?

Bandarage (1983) also raised the issues about the confrontational categories in western feminism. This is an approach in which male or females are considered as categories in opposition by virtue of their sexual individuation. This does not apply to all societies. It is noted that feminists, particularly from 'third world' circles questioned the rationale for opposing points of view as the root cause of schism between men and women (Davies, 1994:55). This differentiation, in Davies' opinion, set up artificial competition between men and women in areas where their interests may be intertwined. The emphasis on sexual differences in western feminism meant that male dominance produced a reductive understanding of how gender subordination comes about in different contexts. Thus such approaches to development can be misleading particularly in some rural communities where men and women depend on each other. Davies' contention was that black feminist positions could assume 'multiple struggles' congruent to post-modernist positions.

Both Bandarage (1983) and Goetz (1991) suggested that if feminism was to have an impact as a political strategy, it had to find appropriate ways of knowing the women's experiences and the structures that shape them and develop theoretical accounts of knowledge which maintained continuity with those experiences. In fact, as will be seen in the section on the South African feminist movement, women's education began as a result of action which was inspired by their social and political experiences. That experience was the basis of their knowledge.

Although there are societies in which interests of men and women may be intertwined, further debates continue around the differences (or similarities) between African feminism and Western feminism. McFadden (1988) warned against ignoring the challenges posed by African patriarchy. She said that women should not underestimate the complexity of changing the long ingrained patriarchal attitudes. It will not be easily overcome by women's consciousness or awareness, but more can be achieved with active steps to challenge male domination.

In pursuit of feminist understandings, knowledge is extracted from individual activism. Perhaps this is most clearly seen when women want to tell a story about themselves, about being women. This form of consciousness raising, wherein experiences and feelings form a point of departure has been found to be problematic (Walters and Manicom, 1996). Problems began when questions of defining a woman were presented into the discourse. What is a woman? Who can define her and also who can best define her? Affectionate personal experiences have been found to focus on an individual and were thus least effective as a means for political activism. After all, women's experiences have been shaped and are a result of social, and material constructs in which they find themselves: their definitions of themselves are shaped by these dominant structures. If they proceeded to use such experiences and feelings as a source of knowledge without an awareness of the dominating political and economic structures they were more likely to be subjective and not have a wider and a more objective application (Collins, 1991; Mbilinyi, 1992).

In addition to a 'political self identity' other opinions pointed to the 'physical or biological' attributes as indeed an important and necessary aspect of her but that it should not be used to limit her. No none, according to Mohanty (1995) 'becomes a woman purely because she is female, - afterall, ideologies of womanhood have as much to do with class and race as they have to do with sex', Mohanty (in Kemp et al, 1995:133).

It could be sound and justifiable on the one hand, that the nature of womanhood is linked to biological attributes, and yet, on the other, this very form of identity has brought about the social stereotypes criticised in feminist writing. A different opinion to the 'biological identification' was asserted that:

the definition of womanhood in African societies is not always biological or sexual. The latter refers to images of passivity, instability, confinement and compassion (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994:54).

So feminism as a subject of social science has continued to seek answers whether it considers itself as an 'object' of humanistic enquiry or aimed at making enquiries about relations between men and women or about women exclusively.

One aspect of the issue is social activism, an attempt to describe the reality of others from a woman's point of view, whereby 'others' are an object of inquiry while 'us' represents those supposed to know, the "elite". Even among women there exists a dichotomy between "the elite" and "the peasants", a weakness pointed out by hooks (1994) and Hawkesworth (1989) among others. They note that producers of written knowledge and theories on feminism have largely been middle class white women. By objectifying 'others', feminists fall short because they begin from outside. With this approach there is tendency to present a limited understanding of the reality of 'others'.

The other aspect relates to the perspectives about rural and urban stereotypes about which conflicting and often shallow profiles have been written (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994). This weakness is compounded by the fact that reality is explained through language, which in numerous feminist studies is compounded because language is culture specific and has its own, particular social history.

Other critiques on western feminist research were concerned on how non-western feminist movements were conceptualised and described (Mudimbe, 1988; Amadiume, 1997). The point raised by Mudimbe was whether such writers wanted to understand non-western philosophy, thought or action or whether they wanted to 'understand in order to control' (Mudimbe, 1988). For Mudimbe, the imposition of European constructs on Africa, for example, was an imperialist project and would not serve African interests. Also Greek and Roman philosophers contributed to the destruction of traditional practices leading to Africa being divided into the East, North and South, or the 'educated Ethiopians' and 'uneducated black savages' (Prah, 1991). The result of this was a reaction called 'rejection syndrome' whereby

Africans rejected that which defined them, their social history, and adopted western-defined history (Prah, 1991).

So knowledge about African social issues was a simple inversion of 'us' and 'them' because of the western epistemological order. Prah (1991) further argues that a simple western perspective does not accommodate diversity and thus misrepresents African humanity. However, this limitation opens the door for responses and for further research studies 'to develop a feminist practice for black women' (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994). In challenging such division (Gerstenberger, 1996) notes for example, that most recently in the 20th century the church leadership is questioning roles of Christian missionary work which has been found instrumental in promoting male domination in language, action, attitudes, images and perceptions.

Amadiume (1997) holds the opinion that Africans have to answer back, consolidate a response and form dialogues; dialogues which encourage multiple points of view. Such an approach could be opening up and acknowledging a diversity of voices within and between cultural groups from the continent of Africa. The purpose of this study is not to research the continental points of view on approaches to emancipation. It aims at making a contribution to the dialogue whether differentiation on the basis of biological differences is or is not important in pursuit of women's emancipation.

Arguments relating to equality between men and women show that historical constructs of sexual differences have had great influence on socio-political perceptions about human beings. Human experiences and social arrangements based on men were "benchmarks" for social and political institutions. Relations between men and women were objectified from a masculine perspective. When feminists attempted to change this one-sided bias they used a number of arguments. First, there was an argument based on human rights that women were sufficiently the same as men so that 'women's rights be based on their resemblance to men' (Hirsch and Keller, 1990:151). If human beings were entitled to basic rights and to the same

treatment, women were therefore entitled to all the rights of men. And if women claimed to be different from men, they thus forfeited the rights enjoyed by men. The problem with this argument was that women used men as the yardstick to move from the 'others' to self and not vice versa. Thus male prescriptions defined how women should be treated.

A second argument, a perspective that supports gender equality wherein a call for equal treatment for women and men before the law was made. Examples like divorce, pay structures and land rights have been commonly used by feminists in the United States. The counter argument to this approach was that the issues of micro domestic matters were placed against macro legal structures and systems in which men would have had greater opportunities than women. For example in a divorce dispute a fifty-fifty split of property, children and subsidy would be agreed upon, but women were still overburdened because while they accepted the responsibility of motherhood and legal protection, their chances of acquiring economic opportunities independent of men were unlikely after the divorce. Equal treatment before the law presupposed that access to education would be determined and influenced how the discourse on feminism was structured within forms and institutions of learning.

Beside the constructs, other debates addressed the domain of feminist studies. Having noted that feminist literature has traditionally been the agenda of the elite and a central part of a professional discourse, the concern was whether feminist studies needed to be centralised or built into the main curriculum at institutions of higher learning. The latter programmes tended to be formal and exclusive and lacked the informal nature of activism, which was predominant in informal educational programmes. Further debates in feminist studies are concerned with whether there should be gender specific studies in education or an integrated approach to gender.

In addition questions continue to be debated about the various ways of challenging the stereotype of how language was used. Language choices became turning points

of the earlier feminist movement: wherein terms used to address people were sexist, 'male' or 'female' and sections of the population were perceived as 'thinkers' as against 'doers', the 'brave' and the 'compassionate' and so on. Such social relations were conceived as dividing society into those 'able' and 'disabled' and continued to influence how institutions were organised and how identities were established.

Other points of view, suggested by the post-structuralist feminists, entered the discourse seeking to challenge the various feminist theories and approaches based on hierarchies of masculine universals and feminine specificities. Post-structuralism aims at advocating a 'thought system of pluralities and diversities rather than unities ...' (Scott 1990:134). An approach in which alternative ways of looking at how relationships of power are constructed, is to question the historical concepts of human relations; to argue that some people are "naturally superior" to others and that justice can be acquired if principles of equality are instituted. In addressing these divisions, Scott (1990) suggested ways of asking how meanings are formed, how they change and how they disappear. This process of deconstruction would involve 'analysing the operations of differences in texts and the ways in which meanings are made to work' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987:137).

The challenge for reconstructing adult education in South Africa revolves around how gender and other inequalities are to be reorganised, to rewrite the public sphere - a sphere biased to male, white and wealthy privilege. In addition to suggestions in the preceding paragraphs, post-structural discourse supports a deconstruction of the feminist identity of women so that diversified identities can flourish (Harding, 1987). In this way oppression cannot be grounded on gender, race or class domination only but on all forms of social relations, some covert and others overt. The superiority of men over women already discussed above, recognises the root cause of conflict between men and women as an artificial formation which can be challenged through 'radical and integrated' terms (Bandarage, 1983).

In an attempt to draw out the theoretical understandings of feminist approaches, it has been shown in the previous paragraphs how variable the perspectives are, and also the range of responses to the epistemologies of women's concerns. Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) and Amadiume (1997) seem to suggest that adopting one-sided theoretical approaches to women's issues may prolong the debates about whether feminism should be about women's issues or about gender relations as well. The most significant aspects for the women's movement, as this thesis argues, is that the actions of women in formal and informal education have had a clear purpose and the goals were pursued without a delay on whether issues to be handled were exclusively women's or not. Thus their energies and processes were goal oriented, toward visible, transformative and positive outcomes.

The previous sections in this chapter addressed women's course of action toward change as well as the analytical debates on how the different approaches on feminism had inherent tensions. Having recognised the constraints and successes in the women's movement and the history of feminism, the question now arises how does feminism encompass and provide a strategy for women to understand emancipation?

The discussions that follow will be based on a definition that feminism is about recognising the systematic discrimination against women on grounds of gender and a commitment to work towards change (Tsikata, 1991).

Feminism and Emancipation

Feminism according to Tsikata (1991) is not the same as the women's movement and it is not Women's Studies. She describes the latter as the branch of social science discipline devoted to the study of women's condition in society. She continues to explain feminism as a movement, a process, toward a goal, whereas Women's Studies refers to a programme of theoretical and analytical analysis, which

defines the understanding of women's positions and conditions. On the basis of the understanding, Tsikata suggests that a course of action may or may not be pursued. Commonly when action is taken it confronts psychological or structural factors which support systems of oppression about gender, race and class, a process which may lead to emancipation.

There has been a shift of emphasis in the approaches to feminism. Some question whether a focus should be placed on 'women's structural issues or power manifestations among human beings. Tisdell (1998) is a post-structural feminist who examined the psychological and structural models of feminist pedagogy. Although she recognised both models she criticised the over-emphasis on structures and the agency of individual capacity and a 'mutual influence of feminist literature' which in her opinion should be labelled post-structural feminist pedagogy. In her view, emancipation is all embracing. It is about action or 'crossing borders'.

Emancipation is a process wherein the

learners find who they are, and connect with the structural system of privilege and oppression that partially inform how they think, how they teach and learn, or how they construct knowledge (Tisdell, 1998:139).

An interesting difference in Tisdell's approach is that exercise of power is exerted 'within the structures', in other words emancipatory pedagogy should enable the learners, not only to know about power, its location and manifestations but, to position themselves within the ranks of power to be effective. Considering that South African women recognise that Constitutionally they are entitled to education for all, and that there are other structures like the Gender Commission and Women's Desk, all addressing gender and women's issues, it is challenging to examine how, through ABET, women may find opportunities to emancipate themselves.

Furthermore, another pedagogical definition which supports a full transformative process was given as:

a theoretical perspective and an area of linking the intellectual and activist work emancipation aims at dismantling oppressive modes of intellectual pursuit to affirm the right to ask for a new, a transformed and a more egalitarian mode of being. Emancipatory discourse challenges and re-creates a new and more humane ground for intellectual work with activism and creativity (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994).

Although Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) is not specific about whether the challenges are directed to women or men, she uses the phrase 'a more humane ground' for activism and creativity. It can be suggested that her orientation provided an alternative insight into how the intellectual and the practical can be put together in a recreative manner. Noting, that Africa is preparing itself to enter the economic world order, and recognising, as in the previous sections, that the African gender agenda was spoken for by others (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994; Amadiume, 1997) as women were also spoken for by other women, or by other men, it becomes even more important, and challenging, that an alternative perspective from African women can be pursued.

The thesis aims at creating space for African women themselves, particularly those from the illiterate peasantry, to say what they think of themselves and how their voices can be incorporated among the voices of feminists broadly.

To summarise, it can be noted that the above perspectives on feminism discuss conceptions of feminism at either a theoretical or at a practical level. It has been shown that there were different conceptions of feminism, which determined the different approaches adopted in the struggle for equality and liberation in South Africa. The question still remains whether the feminist movement empowers individuals from the self, (adopting the psychoanalytic approach) from group action, or through a combination of strategies all of which focus upon socio-political and economic structures. On the other hand, there is the consideration that different contexts call for different and specific approaches. In terms of South Africa, this concern becomes crucially important.

The next section will focus on some of the approaches that have been adopted to find out how the women's movement was organised in an African context.

Feminism in an African Context

The context of Africa can be defined by its people, its ethnic groups, by the diversity of its cultural orientations and its political histories. For example, the people of Africa, although all Africans, may be classified by the continental regions like North Africans, West, East Central or Southern Africans; but they can also be referred to as Kikuyus, Yorubas, Basarwa, Shonas and so on. Whereas these classifications are not critical, the most important distinctions were brought about by cultural, colonial and neo-colonial histories through which the Egyptians or Sudanese, for example, were made to think they were different Africans on the basis of their progress in civilisation. Egypt is described through political scholarship as being outside Africa and in the Middle East, although it is influenced by the Sudan. The Northern regions of Africa are under Muslim influence whereas the southern countries have a mixture of Muslim, indigenous religions, and are largely Christian in their orientations (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994).

Therefore, whilst there may be no unique 'African context', two factors are to be borne in mind. Firstly, the nature and secondly the purpose of African feminism. A number of writers qualify feminism by several factors like race, geography, culture, class, and sex (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994; Lather, 1991; Mbilinyi, 1992). The historical consequences of these factors on women world-wide, although similar, have been of a different magnitude at different times. The responses and approaches, as already discussed, adopted a feminist agenda that varied among western and non-western activists. It can be seen from the above sections, how the sources of tension and conflicts in the feminist literature prevail in theory as well as in practice and that this is likely to continue.

Prominent women leaders in Africa can be traced from the 19th and early 20th century. The warrior queen among the Asante queen mothers, Yaa Asantewa of Ghana (1840-1921), led her people against the British colonisers in the Anglo-Ashanti War. Madagascar was ruled by Queen Ranavalona III between 1883 and 1897. She is renowned for her successes in challenging the threats that came with foreign political systems and was instrumental in managing domestic tensions in Madagascar. Another related movement was in 1922 when the first Feminist Union was formed in Egypt by Hoda Shawari. At the time marriage for girls commenced at a very early age and Egyptian women forced to wear veils at all times. Hoda Shawari is respected for her role in influencing change by recommending marriage at 16 for girls and 18 for boys and that women stop wearing veils (Kenyatta Margaret, 1993).

Snyder and Tadesse (1995) are of the opinion that although women in western countries had greater political momentum, the economic imbalances propelled the drive for feminist movement; whereas in African societies, women had more economic activity and had feminism originating as a result of the marginal and political positions. In traditional African societies gender division of labour differed from society to society. In Ethiopia men worked alongside women during the harvest, and in West African women and men farmed side by side. Yet, 'participation in both societies was encouraged in some functions and the overall governance of the community' (Snyder and Tadesse, 1995: 22). In other parts of the continent the responsibility of cultivation was relegated to women while men engaged in hunting. Women could not claim to have equality with men although they made significant contributions to economic activities, which were not seen as competitive. The women were involved in varied circumstances but deeply rooted in leadership along with men, particularly in the liberation struggles against colonialism and later commercial activities and education, especially in countries that acquired independence in the mid sixties in Africa (Snyder and Tadesse, 1995).

The authors suggest that profound changes came with colonialism. The results of the introduction of colonialism, urban economics and division of labour between men and women in Eastern, West and Southern parts of Africa divided people into peasants and proletarians (Mazrui, 1977). Women organised and mobilised others all over the country to do something for themselves as women, for their children and for themselves and for the country as a whole (Snyder et al, 1995). Women sought ways of educating themselves for full citizenship which meant that the purpose of their actions determined the nature of their movement.

The reaction of women in the 1940s and 1950s in Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone and Uganda was to protest against cash crops. Sometimes when the introduction of cash crops could not be avoided women thought of alternative strategies such as wages for labour, failing which they threatened to leave their husbands (Boserup, 1970). An anti-tax rebellion against colonial powers by women of the south in Nigeria is well known – the 'Women's War'. In Algeria, Angola, Zambia, Mozambique and Zimbabwe women fought side by side with men. Greater participation came from Ethiopian women, who constituted a full one third of the opposition in the 1980 and Zimbabwean women were over 25% of the Zimbabwean African National Union Liberation Army (Snyder et al, 1995:24).

It can be seen the involvement of African women was either for political, economic or social purposes at either national or international level. Growth from national foci grew for example within national organisations across Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya from around 1964 Kenyatta (1993). Many of the discussions centred around future development resolutions, which they were not able to discuss under colonial rule; in fact they 'had no right' to meet as women. From that time onwards women have participated on the international front in numerous conferences: in 1975 in Mexico City (when the Decade of Women was declared); in Copenhagen in 1980 and in 1985 in Nairobi during the United Nations Conference for Women. Kenyatta's closing comments were an expression of a desire for a peaceful future for the women. A world peace in which women would be enabled to 'develop their

countries'; and in which 'through education and training women would be enabled 'to raise better families and to be of some use to their countries' (Snyder et al, 1995: 26).

The above examples illustrate how recent movements were different from earlier strategies of war, survival and protest against unjust labour practices. Women established forms of collective action on socio-economic issues, on the production lines in agricultural activities and in protests of different kinds. All these laid the groundwork for them 'to join men in their struggle for independence from colonialism and prepared the foundation of women and development' (Snyder et al, 1995:26). During the 20th century, the agenda of peace, education and literacy seems to have gained momentum, and this shift into educational concerns for women will be discussed in the following section on the Southern African context.

The Southern African Context

Writing about women's emancipation and women's full participation in social, economic and political life through education may seem like an exercise to relieve oneself from guilt about conditions of women world-wide. Yet the reality is that as long as the condition and position of women have not changed significantly, the challenge and tensions will remain for generations to come. The discussion in these pages of the status of women in South Africa will adopt the two concepts used by Young (1988) – condition and position. By *condition* he referred to the structural factors, the material state that women find themselves in these being: issues of poverty, lack of education and training, overloaded with work and with limited economic avenues. By *position* he pointed to the horizontal relationship between men and women in a social construct that gives men an advantage over women in economic and social status.

There is an opinion that the Women's Movement in Southern Africa appears to have been heavily influenced by British models particularly in Zambia, Zimbabwe,

Botswana, Malawi, Lesotho and South Africa (Meena, 1992). The remodelling on British lines occurred because most of the leaders of those countries were taught and qualified in either British mission schools or acquired higher learning in the British education system. The gender politics were affected by a British legacy and their intelligentsia copied from their colonial authorities. This observation was supported by Kemp, Madlala, Moodley and Salo (1995) that :

until recently self-identified feminist writings and debates in South Africa drew mostly on Western-entered feminist through to analyse the situation of a largely 'Third World' female population in this country. The theoretical position that women's primary struggle is against patriarchy, or against a capitalist patriarchy, has been advance mainly by well-educated white women and a few Black women (Kemp et al, 1995).

A supportive perception is that the movement of Southern African women mirrors that of Britain because it was led by privileged and mainly white women. In addition, the women's struggle was and continues to be perceived as 'externally generated' not only as a result of its original influence, but also because of its inter-connections at global levels (Mikell, 1997). However, one of the many advantages of the open dialogue across cultures is an increase in the recognition of common problems in the last two decades since the Decade of the Women.

Women's empowerment and emancipation are not new phenomena in South Africa although they were vocally articulated through educational institutions. The pioneers of the movements for women were largely middle class feminists whose original discussions were in formal institutions of learning. Universities, for example, were major sites of the feminist struggles, of women's press and of networking (Walters, 1997). Feminist education was thus associated with a critical approach to education and both were about the transformation of the position of women. Feminist education focussed on the methods of teaching (Weiler, 1991) and the character of social classes (Briskin, 1990; hooks 1988). There was agreement that meaningful transformation would happen if the "right skills" were acquired and relevant knowledge for political consciousness was transferred in classroom interaction.

It can therefore be noted that the Southern African women's movement has been influenced by circumstances similar to those of other parts of the continent as well as more recently by the international women's movement. Regardless of the origins or the period of any women's movement there is an overlap of intentions in feminism. Primarily, feminism is about women's empowerment (focussing on the psychosocial and with a concern for conditions), it is also about transformation (concerned with material conditions) but most importantly about critical awareness (concern for attitudinal and psychological changes).

Fester (1992) pointed out that the result of the past segregated policies in South Africa, the women's movement(s) assumed a political character and not a racist form:

Our women's organisations are racially mixed and multi-class, but we ensured that the issues taken up were the issues of the most oppressed women: housing, passes, cost of living, demands for troops to get out of the townships... Our tasks are many, but the most demanding was responding to political crises.... To facilitate broad participation, members are encouraged to speak in the language that they are most comfortable in ... (Fester, 1992:224-225).

The multi-faceted struggle that the women were involved in did not single out a specific male oriented or male directed agenda. In fact according to Fester (1992), some critics argued that the South African women's movements were not feminist enough, but 'women were an integral part of the whole development of the campaigns' (Bernstein, 1985). Although there had not been an overt emphasis on women's positions and conditions, the result of 'the struggle for women's emancipation was subsumed under the struggle for national liberation' (Manzini, 1997:1). Many of the achievements and the successes by women were not documented as 'feminist history'.

Perhaps this was characteristic of how women organised themselves as there was a perception that interests of South African women were in conflict:

The lack of unity among South African women and our apparent failure to identify and struggle together against a single patriarchy have led to perceptions that South African women's struggles lack a feminist consciousness (Kemp et al, 1995).

This view thus indicates that the feminist movement was not articulating 'women's interests' exclusively, but a struggle for national liberation from a racist system.

The complexities confronting feminist action were compounded not only by race, but also by class, gender, geographical location, and women colluding with 'oppression' within patriarchal structures (Bernstein, 1985; Ramphela, 1990; Dangaremba, 1989; Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994). The life roles and opportunities were predetermined according to skin colour, gender and economic class. [It will be illustrated in Table 4.5 in chapter four that inequality in educational provision privileged 'whites' at the expense of 'blacks' across the provinces in South Africa]. It is clear African women in South Africa suffered the triple oppression of race, class and gender. This was an intolerable oppression (Bernstein, in Adonis, 1997).

A different opinion to the political struggle is that the 'emerging African feminism seems to be primarily concerned with basic economic concerns, first the bread and butter issues as well as culture and power' (Mikell, 1997:4). Although Mikell sees this movement as 'emerging' and 'externally generated' many African feminists would disagree with this, especially if one notes the arguments of Amoah, Ogundipe-Leslie and Bernstein above. At the same time Mikell tends to contradict herself by affirming the fact that African feminism 'has been shaped by the women's resistance to Western hegemony and its legacy within African culture' (ibid.). Current dialogue in South Africa seems to agree with the women's voices worldwide that 'African feminism must include political involvement, community involvement and an assertive female autonomy' (Ramphela in Mikell, 1997:342).

Although the system of racial discrimination affected both men and women, it was forcibly applied to African women (Bernstein, 1985). On one hand, 'African men were forced off their land in order to provide cheap labour for white farmers, work on the mines and left women to be heads of their families' (Manzini, 1997, Snyder et al, 1995:22). On another, through racial, sexual and cultural forces, a treble suppression based on all these ideologies made women feel and act 'inferior' when their cultures were denigrated. That system of exploitation 'destroyed the moral fibre of the communities and had side implications for the social and gender relations among the African people' (Bernstein, 1985:8). It was experienced through patriarchy when the relationship between men and women afforded men the superior status and power, and when as the result of industrialisation families were alienated from their land (Snyder, 1995; Hodgson, 1995).

In South Africa men lived in urban areas as single men leaving their wives behind to maintain the families. They still fulfilled traditional roles as bearers of children. Women worked on the land without pay. Therefore women's resistance in this context forced them into a dual agenda of heading large families, while at the same time engaging in the women's movement which was about wider liberation. It was a struggle to make up for the displaced men and survive the oppressive system, a struggle which Steady (1981) refers to as a 'survival imperative'.

Survival at a personal level was also extended to the political domain. In the earlier periods during the 1950's women battled against apartheid alongside the men. Several Defiance campaigns were started. They were fully supported by non-government organisations: in 1954 the ANC Defiance campaign against oppression of women was established. In 1955 six white women formed the Defence of the Constitution League and, later in 1956, the Federation of South African Women organised the women's march to Pretoria against carrying the personal identity books, notoriously known as 'pass' books (Lazar, 1992).

The role of women during the 1960s and 1970s was determined by the absence of men as most leaders were imprisoned from 1963 and for years after. Many fled the country while some were sent to Robben Island. Racism and sexism were glaring issues to tackle. Fatima Meer led the Black Women's federation in 1975 as its president to challenge racial discrimination of women. Women were highly conscientised, agitated and thus were first to be involved during the 1976 riots and in the consequent formation of the 'Committee of Ten', the Soweto Parents Coordinating Committee (SPCC) which was prepared to listen to and find solutions to the plight of children (Adonis, 1997).

The momentum of change in the condition and position of women generally increased in the 1980s and 1990s. The movements are described as phenomenal in the 1990s.

The growth of gender consciousness in South Africa in the years since 1990 has been phenomenal, so much so that it is quite common to hear these days of a "burgeoning" women's movement. This by no means implies the growth of a monolithic, homogeneous movement; rather, it encapsulates the sense of the increasing numbers of women throughout the country who are organising and mobilising in their various sectors around issues that affect them and in ways that challenge may patriarchal assumptions (Kemp et al, 1995:131).

At the same period a number of conferences and debates were organised particularly on women's issues. These in turn have links with some adult education centres in universities which have developed feminist curricula.

One of such centres pioneered formal and non-formal programmes first for Adult and Continuing Education at the University of the Western Cape in 1990. The direct beneficiaries of the training programmes were the adult educators. Thus, instead of concentrating primarily on a feminist agenda, the programmes aimed at sensitising adult educators to gender issues broadly and linked these issues to anti-racism and anti-sexism. One of the motivations for setting up such programmes was that for adult educators to be empowered, they needed to be conscious of how they

themselves promoted and perpetuated oppressive behaviours. They needed to understand the causes and effects of sexism and racism as products of a country in which the two oppressive practices were institutionalised historically and particularly through legal systems.

Although the training programmes at the University of Western Cape were co-ordinated through the university centre it included and attracted a variety of non-university practitioners. The format and nature of the programmes were similar to the vigilant dialogue on feminist popular education in Latin America, the Philippines and Caribbean programmes (Population Council, 1991).

Adonis summarises some but not all of the women's caucus as follows:

- 1985: Congress of South African Trade Unions – Policies on Gender
- 1989: The Institution for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa- Conference on Women and the Constitution.
- 1990: The ANC Malibongwe Conference in Amsterdam – Women United for a Unitary Non-Democratic South Africa.
- 1990: The South African Council of Churches in Durban – Women and the Constitution.
- 1990: Lawyers for Human Rights – Putting Women on the Agenda.
- 1990: The ANC Constitutional Committee in Cape Town – Gender Today and Tomorrow.
- 1990: The Democratic Party Women's Forum in Cape Town – Gender.
- 1991: The Gender research Group of Natal University in Durban – Women and Gender in South Africa.
- 1992: IDASA in Durban Empowering Women in a Democratic Government.
- 1993: Centre for Applied Legal Studies – Gender Equality and the Law.
- 1993: The Woman's National Coalition – Ensuring Gender Equality in the New South Africa (Adonis, 1997:30).

A Women's Coalition was launched in 1993 and exerted pressure after it was observed that women were excluded from the Constitutional negotiations during the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA). It was a culmination of a feminist movement from the forceful Rural Women's Movement (RWM) and the Women's National Coalition (WNC). The former comprised of 'a network of forty-five rural women's groups, mainly from Transvaal (the Northern regions of the country)' Kemp et al (1995:133).

It is a movement in which women organised ‘on the interests of poor African women in its battles with both the state and traditional tribal structures.... It is rooted in the resistance of Black communities to policies of forced removals and loss of their South African citizenship through incorporation in to the Bantustans’ (ibid: 144).

The Women’s National Coalition, is described as a coalition ‘to bring race and gender interests together’ (ibid:144) as it included associations and organisations of women from political parties, business, church groups, professionals from urban and rural communities.

Such a strategy was viewed as a collective force to reckon with:

In creating the WNC, all of the major women’s organisations allowed something larger and more representative to command an authority that none of them could achieve alone, making the WNC something that they could not avoid affiliating to as well as something that could not be controlled by any one organisation (Kemp at al, 1995).

This diverse constituency is on the other hand noted by the authors, as a problem, especially when the WNC faced differences in interests and background experiences. Yet the WNC was strengthened by the 1994 Beijing Conference report, and seized an opportunity, internally to continue to fight for full representation in the anticipated new Government of National Unity in South Africa. The Women’s National Coalition mapped out recommendations to be included in the Women’s Charter for Effective Equality. The Rural Women’s Movement recognised the need for building leadership skills of women in rural areas while fully supporting a call for full participation in local (*kgotla*) and national community structures. One of the many recommendations from both institutions endorsed by the African National Congress demanded a one third representation as a quota to begin with.

The culmination of most of the efforts was the adoption of the Women's Charter for Effective Equality which was adopted in principle in February 1994 culminating in a one third representation by women in the Government of National Unity in the same year. Since then the momentum for equality has not decreased because a number of dilemmas and challenges still remain for women in South Africa. A few of the challenges drawn from the facts that:

African women still remain in rural areas in large numbers:

Recent data show that, while 95 percent of Asian women and 81 percent of coloured women reside in urban areas, only 32 percent of African women reside in urban areas; 9.6 million African women live in rural areas, making over 90 percent of all women there (Kemp et al, 1995:135).

There are more African female prisoners in rural areas than any other sector of the population and more African children in rural than in urban areas...(White et al, 1993:135).

African women's access to resources such as clean running water, health, services, schools and jobs is limited. The sight of African women carrying loads of firewood or water on their heads as they walk long distances to their homes is common. It was estimated in 1989 that 80% of all African households did not have access to electricity; enormous amounts of physical energy and household did not have access to electricity; enormous amounts of physical energy and households financial resources are spent obtaining water (Wilson and Ramphele, 1989).

Such conditions are the result of the legacy of apartheid, which have left women with limited access to health, education, information and welfare services although the New Constitution endorses human rights for all.

In addition there are structures that operationalised the constitutional mandate. Women's issues and gender were integrated through the structures like the Commission for Gender Equality established in 1995 and the Women's Desk in the deputy president's office. Other structures through which sexual discrimination

against sex differences may be reversed, are instituted through the Affirmative Action Clause in the Labour Relations Act and the Human Rights Chapter on Gender, all of which have been assigned a five-year mandate. These government structures and aspects of the Constitution have arisen out of the liberating and popular education movements of the 1970s and 1980s, but most significantly due to 'the distinct voices articulating a separate agenda' (Kemp et al, 1995:154).

Information about the origin of the women's movement, its nature and various programmes which were offered remains important for this thesis. Over and above definitions, forms of or nature of African feminism, this thesis explores an African meaning of feminism derived from the women themselves. The focus is to discover what a group of women, particularly those in a rural community, perceive as forms of women's self determination and empowerment.

Conclusion

All of the above perspectives provide insights into an understanding of the theoretical constructs related to the field of feminism. They aid an understanding of how empowerment, transformation, sources of knowledge and perhaps, also adult education are important in relation to change. It is in this light of the common elements between adult education and the women's movements, both of which promote cultural values which can be the basis for envisaging a future South Africa. As a cultural as well as a strategic vehicle, feminism seeks to explain how improved gender relations may be attained for South Africa. As a vision based on equality feminism continues to raise questions and seek alternative approaches from past western definitions of personhood. It is a vision in which identities may be based on humane, non-sexist and non-racial ways.

The argument in this thesis, which is that alternative forms of education for women still have to be sought - supports Rodrik's (1999) opinion that an empowering

process is a multi-disciplinary approach to education and development and must be considered if South Africa is to transform itself.

In addition to the power of analysis and understanding, another dimension is suggested by Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) - that emancipation aims at dismantling oppressive modes of intellectual pursuit to affirm the right to ask for a new, transformed and more egalitarian mode of being. If emancipatory discourse is about challenging and recreating a new and more humane ground, this will be a framework within which to examine the conditions of women in a rural community of South Africa, and to find out if, indeed, adult education provides an opportunity in which women can challenge, recreate and transform their lives.

In conclusion therefore, the role of adult education is of central importance in a changing society like South Africa. The important points in this thesis, are how these changes affect women in rural areas and what understanding can be drawn from women and their reaction to changes affecting them. The exploration of these questions is conducted by examining the role of adult basic education, which will be seen as a tool for their emancipation.

For a nation that is determined to redefine its history, its philosophy and how it will create a transformed future, the opportunity to have education as a human right, is critical. The call of a new identity and a 'new' education policy run in parallel. The next chapter will explore the development of adult basic education from the period 1979 to 1984 and will discuss the empowering nature of this radical force which became the 'new' adult basic education and training (ABET) in 1994.

Chapter Three

Historical Development of Adult Education in South Africa

Introduction

The development of adult education will be discussed in two stages: first as a social movement and secondly, as a facet of stage of conflict during which the nature of adult education changed in response to government actions and its different education policies. The chapter will describe the context in which socio-political change has occurred: the nature of these changes and how they were linked to movements out of which adult education emerged. Progress from the initial phase in the late 1970s will show the relevance of the mass movement as a radical force for change.

The first stage focuses on the aftermath of the school uprising on 16th June 1976 when the apartheid regime was under extreme social, economic and political pressure. With the death of Steve Biko in 1977, the breakdown of black education became complete. The State lost legitimacy and from 1979 to 1984 there was an increase in discussions among non-government organisations (NGOs) about the situation and future educational needs. At the same time the government set up commissions to evaluate the status of education.

The second stage, between 1985 and 1994, was characterised by an escalation of violence throughout the country. The State responded with the introduction of the State of Emergency on 1st July 1985. Strict censorship was imposed, military rule was tightened and detentions increased. Deaths from political violence increased in the years 1984, 1985 and 1986 from 175 to 879 and 1,298 respectively. The repressive reactions and arrogance of those managing the State could not restrain the anger of the young people, and, indeed, all those concerned with social justice. In 1986, four days before the tenth anniversary of the Soweto school uprising of 16th

June, 'the government imposed the second State of Emergency' (Lodge et al, 1992:87).

Alternative political action through the mass democratic movements and the United Democratic Front (UDF) were established. The UDF was a substitute for the political parties in exile and enjoyed international financial support, which encouraged protests to continue to address political and social concerns. With the slogan 'liberation before education' informal political education superseded formal learning. Alternative education programmes focusing primarily on more active forms of resistance replaced normal teaching lessons. Students used films, poetry, theatre, newspaper articles and critical dissertations to concentrate their minds on political and other relevant material. They also invited experts from outside their schools to address them.

The political pressure from inside and outside the country forced the government to explore alternative responses to the increasing demand for change. It started to abandon 'petty' apartheid, minor discriminatory practices, like separate park benches, beaches and Post Office entrances. The dislocation to black education also put the state under enormous pressure to consider options to address racially discriminatory education provision. The government continued to establish commissions through universities and the Human Science Research Council and consulted with individual academics.

These events made fundamental contributions to the development of adult education in South Africa. This chapter will elaborate upon the two stages and will draw attention to the importance of adult basic education as a force for mobilising action at the level of civil society, a period which saw the beginnings of adult education in South Africa.

Before the South African scenario is described, it is worth noting that adult education as a radical movement emerged in response to injustice and inequality as pointed out in literature:

Historical roots of many contemporary adult education movements and organisations lay initially in a concern for social justice and radical change...these were movements concerned with a new view of man [sic] and society (Lovett, 1988:xv).

Lovett (1988) described the processes of adult education begun by the American Land Grant Colleges in the USA to address concerns for rural development. He further cited the first European conference on unemployment held in 1893 in Milan, and the first 'people's theatre' started by the Italian People's universities prior to 1910. These movements involved unemployed people, workers and students studying together to address social, economic and political problems. Involvement meant 'doing things' together and often made use of role reversal and the processes often resulted in 'students and teachers alike bringing wiser judgement and a keener sense of reality to the class' (ibid.:xvii). The process of 'doing things' together not only addressed issues of who was involved and for what purpose, but also sought to understand how knowledge was generated.

The study of how knowledge was generated also involved the distinction made by Johnson's (1988) between 'useful knowledge' and 'really useful knowledge'. The latter focused on the features of radical adult education, their purposes and the context in which such knowledge was applied. Johnson (1988) wrote about radical adult education in Britain in the period 1790 to 1850 when, 'really useful knowledge' was used to challenge the established church, which was identified as a means of enforcing conformity.

This form of radical education offered an alternative to religious teachings:

Not merely a critical opposition movement, but a counter-hegemony, threatening to construct a whole alternative social order (Johnson, 1988:6).

Systems of belief were interrogated as society sought logical thought and evidence instead of assimilating what was given as sacrosanct. In this way the movement defined its purpose, and sought 'really useful knowledge', the type of knowledge which could be used by individuals and groups to understand their own

circumstances and question the established order and power structures. Knowledge, according to Johnson, was aspired for as a 'natural right', an unconditional good that was not vested solely in institutions whose aim was to dominate and control. He noted that it defined a context in which education should be an unconditional right, not confined to structures or directives of any dominant group.

'Useful knowledge' has a distinct meaning in the present situation. Today adult education is a programme emphasising 'specific kinds of knowledge': functional literacy, competency skills and training. This means that adult education ceases to be a cultural and intellectual process because it is not democratic and does not allow creative and critical roles among those involved (Johnson, 1988).

Such components of the radical movement were characteristic of the developmental stages of adult education in South Africa. Awareness was generated by people together, it formed the main agenda for the public dialogue, which led to the realisation that indeed many adults in the country had been systematically excluded from the educational plans and from educational activities.

1979 to 1984: The Development Phase of Adult Basic Education

This was a period of 'people's education' during which people reflected upon their own experiences in the wider context of inequalities of wealth brought about partly by racial discrimination. Their reflections encouraged a force for change on the oppressive apartheid systems. Overt and covert groupings directed and facilitated discussions or learning activities through churches, trade unions, women's groups, institutions of higher learning and other community structures. Individuals and liberal groups, the latter most prominent in urban areas, led the mass movement. The members of these groupings came from many levels and sectors of the society with no clear racial, gender, class or political divisions. This was because most of the political parties had been banned. There were no fixed agendas. The topics for deliberation were chosen on the spur of the moment. They were drawn from the groups themselves. People participating in these groupings found alternative

avenues to voice their social, economic and political concerns, which for a long time had been suppressed. It was generally a pro-active and unstructured form of mobilisation. Participation at the community or group meetings was voluntary and not aligned to declared political persuasions (Taylor, 1997; Taylor, 1998). In these years formal learning in schools for blacks was also altered. High school students gathered on campus for meetings not for real learning but to organise mass strategies to destroy the apartheid state.

The term 'people's education' came into being at this period with its implications for collective social action based on new commitments. Although this type of activity was not a unified 'movement' as such, it provided an opportunity for individuals to begin to think together. When the debates gained momentum, a new understanding of educational and political inequalities emerged. For example, illiteracy was explained in terms of social injustice based on racial discrimination and was understood from a new perspective. Living conditions that led to social ills were linked to the oppressive apartheid ideology and its social systems. As people internalised the factors they understood better how apartheid destroyed their intellectual abilities and were thus determined that apartheid should be dismantled. In the workplace workers realised the causes of the appalling conditions and identified the basic requirements for a better future. This awareness, which Johnson (1988) refers to as 'really useful knowledge', provided a framework within which communities could discuss and analyse how oppressive structures operate and are sustained.

The period under study was a time during which the importance of education in the future was part of a serious public debate. Many adults became aware of the importance of literacy and began to feel the need for it. A radical view of empowerment – similar to that outlined by Youngman (1986) in the previous chapter – emerged. Through adults education communities were being politicised, mobilised and organised. Those who were involved in informal adult education activities became more aware of the role of education and made purposive decisions to become involved. Some of the young adults committed themselves freely to serve as

volunteers or part time workers in the non-governmental and community structures. Many of the volunteers were not professionally trained in teaching adults, as was shown in the evaluation report of one of the organisations at the time (Rajuili, 1986). In spite of this, the teachers' commitments and enthusiasm meant that they sought creative and innovative methods and media for teaching. Learners were encouraged to make suggestions for materials for learning. For example, discussions were held which reflected local and national events, information and support was provided to families for young people wanting to join the liberation struggle.

This was an empowering period during which a radical ethos in adult basic education was being developed. The focus was on specific interrelated social issues that impinged upon the social, political and economic conditions affecting people's lives. There was a new 'power within' the people to liberate themselves, not so much at an economic level but politically and psychologically. Where there was consensus they took pro-active measures about issues, for example, water, land rights, racism, health and education. When Taylor (1997) writes about the experiences of the liberation movements, for example, she points out that they were 'led organically, from the bottom and acted as pressure groups to serve collective interests'. However, it would be misleading to give the impression that the empowered groups were only those from 'grassroot' levels. Most of these efforts, according to Lodge et al (1992) were supported by a 'cadre of intellectual leadership' which joined and facilitated the mass movement.

The processes of the 'people's education' in which there was a slogan 'each one teach one' could be seen as a form of 'popular education', a voluntary mass movement which was unstructured and unco-ordinated. Education *per se* was not the sole agenda of the mass movement, but one of the main issues, which eventually forced the Nationalist government to prioritise education after the student riots of 1976. Therefore education was integrated with the practical issues of communities and attracted participants from all levels of society.

Because of the voluntary nature of the process, very little national qualitative or quantitative data is available from that period. There was also no generally accepted standards for measuring the achievements. However Hofmeyr and Swart reported that in 1980 '40% of the total population (and 48% of blacks ⁸) had no education at all, while a further 34% (38% of blacks) had left school at standard 5 or before' (Hofmeyr and Swart, 1984:81).

The crisis in education, the reality that education had come to a standstill as a result of the total boycott of classes forced the government to respond and review its education policies. The level of consciousness about educational inequities had strengthened the resistance to a racist educational system. In an attempt to produce a coherent plan a commission was set up in 1980 by the Nationalist government to investigate the different forms of adult education. In particular the Education Commission investigated how education could be reformed with reference to equal provision for all races. Researchers were instructed to identify differences between informal, non-formal and adult education. In early 1981 the de Lange report ⁹ conducted through the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) on education was published. The significance of the de Lange report was that apart from distinguishing between various forms of education it highlighted the gross failure of the state to provide education for the majority of the nation.

The de Lange report was followed by a number of responses, proposals and related papers. The first and second commentary papers were by van den Berg from the University of Cape Town. In the second response, the concept 'non-formal education' (NFE) was used in recognising that South Africa:

⁸ It is assumed that by definitions of the old racial stratum black referred to Africans as they were the most discriminated group and the majority in numbers compared to Asians and people of 'coloured' descent.

⁹ The 1981 de Lange Report was the key reform document with five chapters on the (i) rationale from the Cabinet, (ii) the 11 principles, (iii) problems with provision, (iv) recommendations for provision, and (v) issues of quality assessment in the last chapter.

has a long history of deliberate state neglect of non-formal education ... and this belated recognition of the field, and the possible beginnings of sponsorship of it, is a significant shift in educational policy (Millar et al, 1991: x).

In the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) report, a distinction was made between informal, formal and non-formal education:

Informal education is associated with spontaneity as it happens naturally in one's living environment. *Formal* education is viewed by the HSRC as planned process, which happens in schools and or colleges. It is seen not to have much flexibility and it is to be accomplished within a set time frame.

Non-formal education was defined as education that proceeds in a planned but highly adaptable way in institutions, organisations and situations outside the spheres of formal and informal education (Millar, 1991: 20-21).

Non-formal education was directed to literacy or an induction programme (as in training or in-service institutions) as a second chance for those who had never been to school, or who had left early. It included those who were upgrading their educational qualifications.

After the investigations different conceptions of 'non-formal' education and 'adult education' emerged. Provision differed in levels, content and financial management. These newly founded programmes could now be termed 'non-formal' in that there was increased planning, structuring, monitoring and evaluation. In 1983, a declaration was made in the White Paper on Education¹⁰ that non-formal education would be located in technical colleges and referred to:

institutions that are pre-eminently suited to the planned presentation of non-formal education programmesthe expansion of non-formal education among other population groups is still in its infancy, but it is being given high priority within the education department concerned ... (White Paper on Education, 1983:10).

¹⁰ The 1983 White Paper on Education was a product of the findings, comments and a summaries and recommendations based on the HSRC findings chaired by de Lange.

Departments of education were divided along racial groupings and some controlled through the four 'homeland' states. Each had its own unique adult education policy. The targets were different and the content of the programmes tailored to the people who had enrolled at a given time. There was no homogeneity about how non-formal education would be provided:

Technical, vocational and commercial education for **Coloureds** were provided at technical colleges. Programmes were established where there is a need e.g. drama, singing and music. Management and appointment of staff including women professionals being considered.

Among **Indians**, non-formal education had been provided for a number of years to promote literacy. All forms on non-formal education at the non-tertiary level were presented at ML Sultan Technikon taken over by the Indian Education branch of Department of Internal Affairs. Research is being carried on need for community learning centres to introduce classes for adults.

The Dept of Education and Training concentrates on provision of non-formal education for **Blacks** on programmes geared for the special nature of the adult education needed. At the moment there are 400 learning centres throughout the country conducted in the afternoons and evenings – subjects are in literacy training to standard 10.

For **Whites**, a variety of effective non-formal education programmes are presented by a number of bodies and organisations, some with assistance and financial support from the Cultural Affairs Directorate and the Directorate of Sport Advancement, others with funds from the government (White Paper, 1983:19- 20).

The former Department of Education and Training (DET) set up 'night schools' to educate the young adults who had failed their final high school examinations. In order to upgrade their qualifications they could register with adult centres only in those subjects that they had failed. Financial resources were provided by the State for the night schools while foreign and national donors supported the non-government organisations, and encouraged accountability through reports that were compiled from different sources.

A number of papers on 'non-formal education' were prepared by Hofmeyr and Swart (1984), Van der Stoep and Louw (1984) and Millar (1985). All these are in a

collection of readings in Millar et al (1991). Hofmeyr and Swart (1984) were not explicit in defining the nature and form of non-formal education except to refer to the definition in the 1983 White Paper. Their analysis was that NFE was provided by 'a number of bodies and organisations with or without government support'; and that 'most NFE takes place in a teacher/training and class situation' (Hofmeyr and Swart, 1984 in Millar, 1985:80-83). Although both authors were policy experts in education, they had limited experience in informal and non-formal education, so their views were largely theoretical. Their reports were silent about the plight of women but put forward recommendations which addressed the needs of youth. Van der Stoep (1984) viewed non-formal education as 'any learning activity which lies outside the field of the formal school system, a more pliable and adaptable option which provides for a diversity of needs' (Millar, et al 1991:95).

It can be seen from these Commissions that there was a variety of perceptions of what non-formal education was and how it could be provided. There was general agreement that education of adults was 'non-formal' because it was not conducted in formal schools or any type of formal institution, but it was education that was flexible, attempting to be adaptable to the needs of people. This narrow description pointed to the limited understanding that prevailed among analysts. They concentrated on structural aspects of adult education and not its moral purpose. Generally there was no clear difference made between 'formal' and 'non-formal' which was also referred to as a 'basic education' or 'low level' education including vocational training.

The institutions offering alternative adult education at the time included the privately funded South African Committee for Higher Education (SACHED). It had provided ABE research initiatives and tutorials for high school and university students who had corresponded through distance education since 1959. It was an independent organisation, sponsored by overseas donations. It offered the O or A Level British curriculum as an alternative programme for the final year of high school. Although it was considered to be an adult education institution none of the programmes provided ABE directly. It provided research, training and produced alternative

material for practitioners working with lowly skilled adults and youth. Through its Labour and Community Development Unit, outreach programmes with trade unions were organised. This included writing of handbooks for trade union members at a basic level of literacy and numeracy. For a long time SACHED was a pioneer of adult education as a formal programme. It maintained its role and served as a resource centre while the non-governmental and community-based organisations continued with non-formal basic education.

Out of the 21 universities created out of the 1959 Extension of the University Act, the 'white' universities were urban based and a few 'black' universities were located in rural areas. There was a marked difference between the financial resources availability of courses, and expertise of staff in the 'white' universities and the less favoured 'black' universities. As a result the possibilities for community outreach were uneven. The beginnings of adult basic education as outlined in the above sections came about through five ¹¹ of the twenty-one universities and a few tertiary institutions. Their primary focus was on teacher training and research into adult education. Because most of the universities that pioneered centres for adult basic and continuing education were located in parts of the white urban areas, very limited numbers of interested people could access them. In order to close the gap but also reclaim legitimacy at grass-roots level, community-based organisations increased in numbers in rural areas.

It can be seen that there were very different conceptions of what adult education or 'non-formal' education was, its purposes, its structure and the end goals. Clearly during the first phase, the 'people's education' phase, although the efforts were unco-ordinated, education was seen as an integral part of the socio-political agenda. What made the movement 'popular' was the identification of common problems and the openness of the process.

¹¹ University of Durban/Pietermaritzburg campus; University of Witwatersrand - Centre for Continuing Education; Centre for Adult and Continuing Education - Western Cape University; Western Cape Technikon; and Technikon RSA.

What has been shown in the preceding section is the manner in which adult education evolved. After the Soweto riots in 1976 concern for education gained momentum. The mass movement influenced people whose focus had originally not been only educational, but was also concerned with the improvement of their social, political and economic conditions. The curriculum was very broad. Participation in the processes was all-inclusive and open. Teaching focussed on the important and negative issues affecting people in their everyday lives. There were no prescribed uniform courses. The course content was decided amongst the group members which resulted in high motivation and commitment levels. Although there were no physical resources (especially in rural areas) or financial resources, 'educative processes' were sustained with increased awareness of social and political conditions.

In 1982 recession hit South Africa, and a year later the market value of gold fell and continued to decrease in value for some months. The morale in the country was affected by the increasing unemployment which had implications for education once again. Debates about the status of education took an even more serious turn.

1985 to 1994: Consolidation of Policy Debates on Adult Basic Education and Non-formal Education

By 1985 the inflation rate had soared to 16.9% at a time when unemployment among African people had increased to 25%. The increased unemployment, foreign debt and negative growth rate, were exacerbated by prolonged drought that forced many people to migrate to cities (Lodge et al, 1992; Fine, 1997; NEPI, 1993). There was overpopulation in the urban areas, rent rates increased and strikes intensified. The conditions fuelled the already growing culture of "no tolerance of racism" in places of employment and the continuing rejection among students of the curriculum designed by the Nationalist government.

Over the years and through the height of political upheaval in 1985 and thereafter, some university departments started community outreach projects and set up centres for adult and continuing education with programmes that targeted adults. The topics for discussions, although unstructured, continued to engage people in critical analyses of the socio-political situation. Paulo Freire's theories on education for conscientisation influenced the discourse and seemed relevant at the time. Patterns of analysis and the content of the groups varied from rural to urban projects. The nature of projects in rural areas adopted names that communicated intentions toward integrated development, for example *Ekukhanyeni* 'Source of Light', *Masifundisane* 'Let's teach one another', *Dluvhukani* 'Develop yourselves'; whereas those in urban areas concentrated primarily on literacy needs, for example Project Literacy (PROLIT), Learn and Teach, English Literacy Project (ELP).

Most of the community efforts were complemented and strengthened when foreign funds from Danish, German, British, American and many other international development agencies supported the programmes. The United States Agency for International Development and the European Commission were the major foreign donors during that period (Harley et al, 1996). Financial support not only increased motivation among community structures, but also shaped the agenda in many organisations.

Financial support from overseas forced the Nationalist government to establish 'para-statals' – the semi-government structures which were conduits for funds which would run parallel to international support. The Independent Development Trust (IDT), and the Development Bank of South Africa were among the established agencies that managed government funds to support community projects already in existence. Funds were also distributed by agencies not receiving money direct from the government. Kagiso Trust and Education Development Agency were independent funding agencies that raised funds mainly from overseas donors. They supported sectors in pre-school education, adult basic education, small scale housing projects, advisory projects, land issues, legal resource centres and environmental development agencies.

National agencies within the country began to compile specific reports. In 1983 the National Training Board and the Human Science Research Council initiated a pilot study on training needs and standards. The pilot, which was completed in 1989, prepared the ground for a strategic investigation into training for a future South Africa and contained advice on training. Early on the NTB realised that stakeholders, primarily those with unionised labour and illiterate adults had not been included. The NTB thus co-opted eight working committees, each assigned a remit relating to important issues. The task team on ABE presented its Report in 1994 with 'the main feature of a future system for adult basic education within the context of vocational training' (Harley et al, 1996:153).

A list of a few researchers included Millar (1985) on non-formal education; Walters (1987) on democratic participation in community organisations; Muller (1987) on several themes; 'people's education, the university and whose work was prepared and compiled in Millar et al. (1991). Each of these research reports had specific focus, some were regional, others attempted to cover the situation nationally.

All of them were in the main written by academics with experience in matters of policy reform and educational reconstruction, with very little attention to gender issues. This does not apply to the research studies by Walters (1987). Much of her regional research on adult education practice examined the extent of its democratic and non-sexist participation within non-government organisations in Natal and in the Western Cape. In addition French (1990) provided a reflective evaluation of adult basic education nationally.

In anticipation of the inevitable political change that South Africa would undergo, major and vigorous policy debates intensified on different fronts including foreign and university policy units. Initiatives were also advanced from concerned parents, trade unions, research councils, political parties, church groups and women's associations.

While a number of companies embarked on social responsibility programmes, others began in-house basic education programmes and also donated funds to community projects. Concurrently with the private sector efforts, concerned parents supported the youth initiative:

Our struggle took on an increasingly national character in another sense too. From being youth led, the struggle began to involve all sections of the population. Greater involvement of parents gave rise to the initiatives like Soweto Parents Co-ordinating Committee. This development was not confined to education however (Sisulu, 1986:267).

The Soweto representative committee was later enlarged to become the National Education Co-ordinating Committee (NECC) which was launched in 1985. It comprised national representatives from parents, teachers and students mainly from previously discriminated against sections of the population. Yet, there were reactions from rural and distance areas that NEPI was a highly liberal and 'urban' oriented committee whose representatives came from universities and urban circles. Although the NECC had been successful in containing the anger of the young adults, 'a shield and a spear' (in Sisulu's description), it could not be effective unless it was seen to address the concerns of students. It therefore commissioned national research on the quality and scope of education, including adult basic education, through the National Education and Policy Investigation (NEPI) between 1989 and 1992. Because the NECC was considered a widely representative committee, it was able to influence the composition of subsequent research teams. This ensured that all sections of the community were represented and consulted as both researchers and participants. The ensuing 1993 NEPI Report delineated policy options for adult basic education suggesting forms and structures in which the various needs of adults could be addressed. The report also put forward proposals on how adult education could be funded Harley et al (1996).

The workers' movement took the matter of workers' education seriously during this period. While the NECC investigation continued debates within the labour movement also intensified and in 1989, began to be involved in policy debates other

than those concerning worker's rights. Educational and gender issues were prioritised. The labour force was consulted widely through the Congress of the South African Trade Unions (COSATU). A major participatory research was conducted by COSATU's Participatory Research Project in (1993) wherein the concerns for women in the workplace were articulated. This led to conferences and workshops from which an Education Pack was prepared. Its intended aim was 'to address labour education and training issues and proposed solutions and a plan for a democratic economy of the future' (COSATU, 1993; Mayo, 1997: 82).

At the time, there were some radical, feminist shop stewards who took seriously gender inequalities in the work-place. As a result the COSATU research was among the first nationally conducted study with an interest in adult education provision and gender issues. Although the latter was more concerned with workers in employment, it sensitised the industries about the discrepancies in salary scales between women and men. The heightened discussion and research in the sector was a source of encouragement for other players like universities and alternative organisations to set up programmes addressing the problem of adult education and gender.

In November 1993 a conference of practitioners and academics in adult and community education was organised by the South African Committee for Adult Basic Education (SACABE). It had a large representation from non-government and community based organisations, political parties, unions and university researchers. Information from the NEPI research formed the thrust of the educational debates. It was not merely information that was taken seriously, but the process of building learning capacity and transferring skills was introduced in the conference agenda. It was envisaged that policy considerations for the future would endorse the principles of capacity building and the integration of knowledge. Indeed, the integration of knowledge and skills appealed to workers many of whom were unskilled while others were unemployed.

Parallel to these events and after the SACABE conference, the African National Congress (ANC) with an advantage of a strong capital base from foreign donations, established the Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD).¹² This organisation prepared an Implementation plan for education and training which was adopted as the ANC Policy document in 1994. The policy rationale was specific to the political principles of the ANC.

Pressure was exerted by the labour movement (especially the non-COSATU unions) on the private sector to contribute to the training of their employees (Harley et al. 1996:152). Many companies started programmes for retraining their employees, however there was concern among private companies and leaders in the community about the high numbers of unemployed people.

In 1992, the private sector set up a consultative forum on education. It consisted of a partnership between business, trade unions, teacher fraternities, non-government organisations and political parties and formed the Joint Education Trust (JET). This collaborative plan not only focussed on the future of education policy but made preparations for the future by setting up a Trust Fund amounting to R500 million over a period of five years. Money was donated by a number of companies and the partners in the Trust recommended that contributions should be made to three focal areas, teacher training, adult basic education and youth development. Apart from teacher training the support for adults and young people would address the needs of the unemployed. After four years of community funding JET commissioned two types of research, one a national survey on ABE provision conducted by the University of Natal (Harley, et al. 1996). This was the first useful quantitative national survey on ABE. The second was an ethnographic study by two researchers from Cape Town and Western Cape Universities later known as '*The Social Uses of Literacy*' (Prinsloo and Breier et al, 1996).

¹² CEPD was the education resource centre set up and sponsored by the African National Congress as its education policy unit on education and training.

These studies examined the use of literacy in various contexts with the aim of challenging common assumptions in educational and policy work that adults without schooling are a homogeneous mass of socially disabled people. They provide details of the ways in which people without extended formal schooling are able to mobilise local forms of knowledge and resources and further argue that these provide a base for effective education and development strategies (Prinsloo and Breier, 1996:11).

The research was a contribution to the understanding of the different literacies used in South Africa with implications for the development of critical literacy in future policies. It also reiterated the need for the curriculum content to be relevant to learner's social context.

The preceding paragraphs have provided an overview of the processes that led to the prominence of adult education from 1979 to 1990. The information illustrated the varied efforts from small initiatives, parents, community based groups, universities, trade unions and political parties all attempting to address the inequalities in the provision of adult basic education. These were efforts that were explicitly political in their opposition to apartheid.

There were other distinct characteristics in all these efforts. Firstly, there was the indigenous nature of the initiatives. These began among the people and not orchestrated by outsiders. Some local initiatives developed into small, national structures of concerned parents, trade unions, women's groups and others were organised as institutions focusing on research in ABE. Support was later solicited from international development and funding agencies. The second characteristic was the recognition of the value of engaging people in decision making, encouraging and endorsing participation when feasible. While such participatory values are common to many other movements for change they also resonate with the communal nature of some African societies. In the next section, these joint efforts will be explained alongside the rationale of the concept of '*letsema*' a collective approach to action characteristic of African humanism.

African Humanism and Social Actions

The historical analysis of the first two stages of adult basic education in South Africa and the approaches that were adopted by people in various sections of the country clearly illustrate the passion there was about wellbeing for all (Sisulu, 1986; Mohlomi, 1986; Lodge, 1992; Morrow, in Millar et al. 1991). A desire to do good for oneself and others through systematic and integrated but varied programmes was a feature of many adult basic education programmes. Vivienne Taylor (1997) captures the nature of the mass democratic movement, for example, by describing the elements as 'movements that were mobilised to serve collective interests through a process of organised action' (ibid.:252).

People were inspired by their experience to unite across the various divides of colour, race, class and gender, and they worked with common objectives and collaborated in new ways while maintaining political independence. It has not come as a surprise that adult basic education was one of the pillars of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) which aimed at the improvement of social, political and moral virtues, a type of programme that Bahl (1997:3) calls 'a collective crafted vision of change'. Although Bahl's study was on women's emancipation, the important lesson from her research studies was that 'collective action' need not be defined in terms of 'otherness' or 'difference', but in terms of how emancipation as a social force can interact within and between social systems to change oppressive structures.

According to Bahl's (1997) analysis, social action succeeds if developed through mutual thinking. The common experiences derived from the impacts of history can be effective and translated into desired action. This is possible if communities rely on their own resources. However she is wary of 'falling back to the colonial past'. Change, in Bahl's opinion, 'occurs not because of either force, but because of the interaction of forces' (Bahl, 1997:4). In order to move forward, Bahl suggests that there should be less talk of the past, lest the new theories are tainted by their history;

there is no need to talk about Eurocentric, Western emphases, but to concentrate instead on how current internal and external forces can be utilised.

Nevertheless, it is argued in this thesis that the omission of historical reflection and analysis of the achievements of the 'people's movement' has led to ABET policies which are problematic. These problems will be further discussed in the next chapter

Summary

This chapter has outlined the historical developments of adult basic education (ABE), from 1979 to 1994 when it was regarded as non-formal and community-based. It has traced the background and elements that made ABE a radical force for change which led to the crisis in the South African state manifested in the 1976 Soweto riots. Following this uprising, the reactions of the state were repressive and arrogant and heightened the determination of students who were mobilised on the principle of 'liberation before education'. Formal learning in schools was subsequently replaced by informal and alternative education: this became a social movement that laid foundations for the provision of education for adults.

When the campaigning slogan 'people's education for people's power' was adopted., People were united and were making demands for a new democratic type of education. They considered themselves empowered, but agitation was responded to by repressive measures such as the permanent emergency that was imposed and the full indiscriminate power that was given to the police and the defence force. However, one of the outcomes of the adult education movement was that the illiteracy level of the majority of people in the country was highlighted. Literacy was perceived as one of the weapons for achieving the desired political and socio-economic change. Discussion about the type of future education culminated in policy debates at conferences and congresses like the National Fora in 1983; 1986; AZAPO: 1984; National Consultative Conference: 1985; 1986, and COSATU: 1986.

There were limitations in this era of empowerment. Whereas community participation increased the socio-political awareness and consciousness among the majority of people, their understanding of the larger forces that determined their well-being was not understood. They had used the mass movement to achieve political awareness but had not prepared themselves for owning and controlling economic power. This weakness was noted by Sisulu (1986): 'while they have broken the shackles of direct government rule, the people haven't yet managed to control and direct the situation' (Sisulu in Millar, 1991:269).

Indeed in the education sector a strong community of adult education practitioners was established. Although their expertise developed from practice their collective action lacked a sustained and inclusive vision. Community based organisations held on to localised empowerment, trade unions were more concerned about worker's rights, research councils surveyed issues of concern to the funding 'masters' and political parties wanted to ensure that principles were in congruence with future political plans. The role of the trade unions in raising issues of gender were, nonetheless, significant. These changing emphases clearly indicate that in a period of transition the different perceptions about the nature and purpose of adult education will affect its content and implementation.

It has been seen that the most critical phase was the period between 1990 and 1994 when the realities in the country demanded flexible ways of responding to the increasing international and national pressure for South Africa. The exodus of expertise from non-governmental and non-formal structures to state controlled education left the sector depleted of its human resource – a resource that had been built up over decades. This meant that the social movement was being restructured, its participatory nature was being undermined, heralding the beginning of the contradictory nature of adult education, where the voice of a broader constituency is silenced. It is this shift which changed the radical nature of adult education in South Africa. The control and the agenda of adult education was beginning to assume the bureaucratic and impersonal aspects as discussed in the first chapter.

The discussions in this chapter have highlighted some important aspects of mobilising collective action which was free and voluntary. Initiatives came from within and among the people, knowledge was defined and wider participation was encouraged in pursuit of a desired political dispensation. The limitations in the 'collective civil movement' were also cited. The chapter concludes by illustrating how within this mobilisation, some efforts were directed to show that adult education is a sector linked to all aspects of human life. The question therefore remains whether in its 'new' form ABET will enable the learners achieve the vision of a dispensation which is economically and socially transformed.

The next chapter will examine the rationale of this 'new' ABET policy, the processes that preceded its formulation, the structure and purposes for its implementation so as to find out whether any of the concerns pertaining to women's emancipation were taken into consideration.

Chapter Four

The ‘new’ Adult Basic Education and Training Policy of Government

The previous chapter examined the increased awareness and great concern for non-formal education during the periods 1979 to 1984 and 1985 to 1994. These are the periods adult education was associated with either non-government structures or programmes offered by the state through ‘night-schools’. However, after 1994 adult education changed into the ‘new’ adult education and training programmes. For the first time, education in South Africa, including adult basic education, became a fundamental right enshrined in the Constitution. The State was committed to create a framework within which a programme for adults would be implemented. This addressed specifically those who had never attended school and those who wished to continue with their education. Redress and transformation were seen as the major tasks and were articulated in the national vision for adult basic education and training (ABET).

In this chapter it will be seen that in developing policies ABET policy makers were seeking firstly to address the complex variety of literacy needs in contemporary society. Secondly, they wished to create an environment in which adult education and adult basic education form the foundation for further learning. The overall goal in the ABET national vision was:

to develop an enabling environment in which high quality ABET programmes can flourish. A key component of this is to guide providers and not to control and prescribe what they do. It is thus envisaged that the policy development in this field will be an on-going process influenced by three main features; the accumulation of experiences; the development of discourse; and the systematic reflection on the implementation of legislative and executive measures (ABET Policy, 1997:2).

The 'new' adult basic education and training policy has to be understood as growing out of the background ¹³ of the mainstream mass movement. Had it not been for the resilience of the mass movement, trade unions, women's groups, concerned parents and the private sector, adult education would have not been an important part of the education agenda. Although ABET was shaped and informed by the socio-political processes that began as a mass movement, it is currently directed and shaped by the principles outlined in the Education White Paper, 1995. ¹⁴

Since the single education system was introduced in 1995 (and, at the turn of the century, it is still in a development stage), this chapter discusses the importance of socio-political processes in forming the 'new' policy. It will highlight the changes in forms and types of participation (Jansen, 1998; 1999), the factors that influenced the changes, the nature of the programmes and particularly and most importantly, for this thesis, the omission of the concerns of women (Unterhalter, 1998) in the adult basic education and training plans. As a starting point in discussing the nature of the ABET programme, it is important to discuss the main premises, priorities and difficulties on which the 1997 ABET Policy was based. It was against this background that all the factors - the vision, definitions, framework and content for learning were delineated and interwoven into policy.

Most important of these factors which were taken into consideration in the reconstruction of education in South Africa were those concerning a unified structure, transformed curricula and equal access. These informed strategies for the future of education, including those for ABET. First, the Ministry of Education declared as its main purpose the setting up of one national education system. It recognised the fact that it had to bring into one education ministry, nineteen previously fragmented and

¹³ The formulation of ABET followed the initiatives of the NEPI, COSATU Participatory Research Project, the NTSI undertaken by the National Training Board, the SACABE Conference in 1993, the Implementation plan by CEPD with the ANC Education and Training Policy document, 1994 (ABET Policy Document, 1997 :1).

¹⁴ The 1995 White Paper on Education is based on a vision that all individuals must "have access to and succeed in lifelong education and training of good quality" if they are to meaningfully contribute to the economic challenges in South Africa.

incoherent departments of education that had been separated on racial and regional lines. In addition to restructuring a 'unified machinery', there was the difficult task of changing attitudes that had been conditioned by racial differentiation and provision of education through separate departments each with its defined goals. A new mind set was imperative, one in which shared visions for transformed curricula could be developed. Such challenges formed the rationale for changing attitudes and re-orientating teachers to equal access as well as improved quality and better standards for all.

Second, the Ministry recognised and accepted responsibility for prioritising the needs of the majority of the unskilled adult population of whom 2.8 million were illiterate. Illiteracy in South Africa adopts the UNESCO definition that 'an illiterate person cannot, with understanding, both read and write a short, simple statement on their everyday life' (UNESCO, 1999). This narrow definition suggests that basic reading and writing skills with understanding make one literate.

Given that the new Constitution endorses education for all, financial resources had to be distributed on the basis of equity. Illiteracy was among the primary concerns in the Education Ministry. Investment in education meant that some sections of society, particularly whites, were expected to accept redistribution of the financial resources and privileges which they had for so long enjoyed. Other sections of the society were also to enjoy free and compulsory education provided by government. The allocation and projections for national education budget were as follows:

Table 4.1 National Education Budget Allocation, 1995 – 1999.

*1995	22.8% of the national budget
(Source:	*1995 Central Statistics October Household Survey).
1996/97	21.0% = R39.2 bn.
1997/98	21.3% = R40.3 bn.
1998/99	23.0% = R46.8 bn.
(Source:	South African Statistical Survey by the Institute of Race Relations,
1997/98)	

Out of this budget allocation to education each year only 1% was allocated for adult basic education and training (SAIRR, 1997/98; Buddlender, 1998) and divided in proportion to the requirements of each province according to their budget plans.

Therefore, although education as a whole was the second highest funded sector by the state, the percentage allocation for ABET was inadequate and thus the actual programmes for adult learning were run by night schools (partially funded by the state) and by non-government groups similar to those illustrated in Table 4.2 below. It should be noted that the survey reflects the results calculated on the basis of the responses received and may have left out some data from other providers (Harley et al. 1996). Nonetheless, since it was the first quantitative result of the survey of ABE commissioned (by the Joint Education Trust)¹⁵ it provides a preliminary overview. Teaching adult learners took many forms, and was delivered through teaching industries, training institutions, through agencies that developed material, through research units mainly in universities, through policy development centres, teacher support institutions, publishing houses, network associations as well as through consultancy agencies. Most commonly, each of the listed organisations raised funds independent of any government subsidy.

Table 4.2 shows the numbers of sites of learning where actual teaching and learning was provided, but does not include centres for material development and research.

¹⁵ See chapter 3, page 87, the description of the origin and purpose of the Joint Education Trust.

Table 4.2 Providers of ABET Programmes per Province.

Distribution by province and sector of organisations and projects believed to be running ABE programmes							
Province	Night schools	Companies	NGOs/CBOs	Para-statals	Commercial organisations	Religious organisations	Totals
Gauteng	66	26	14	4	8	7	125
KwaZulu	178	20	23	2	4	4	231
W/Cape	51	3	9	3	1	0	67
Eastern Cape	159	4	5	1	0	0	169
Northern Cape	26	2	5	0	0	1	34
North West	330	0	2	1	0	0	333
Free State	99	0	1	1	0	0	101
Northern province	338	2	5	1	0	0	346
Mpumalanga	96	3	6	1	0	1	107
Sector Totals	1343	60	70	14	13	13	1513

Source: A Survey of Adult Basic Education in South Africa in the 90s Harley et al. 1996

Although Mpumalanga province (where the research was conducted) experienced homeland division as in the Eastern Cape, North West and Northern provinces, it does however show a significant number of 'night schools'. Yet it also had considerable adult learning activities initiated by NGOs and CBOs. If the total population is taken into account Mpumalanga has a similar proportion of 'night schools' to the Northern Cape, and Free State but a higher proportion than KwaZulu/Natal and Eastern Cape, Gauteng and Western Cape and a lower proportion than in Northern Province and North West. Comparisons are difficult to make because of the rural-urban divisions and the different racial compositions of the provinces. For example Western Cape has only 21% Africans whereas Mpumalanga has 89%. Homeland policies of the past could account for this high proportion of 'night schools'.

There are significant socio-political systems in operation in Mpumalanga province. One is that the district of Moutse is surrounded by a number of villages under the rule of traditional leaders. Another fact is that this part of the province is dominated by white commercial farmers who draw labour from the people of Moutse. These factors have had negative effects on educational advancement in the district. Traditional control and administration has delayed plans for adult education (to be further explained in chapter six). In addition, though the people of Moutse have set community education activities (NGOs and CBOs) very little financial input has been received from the commercial sector. This could mean a number of things, notably, disinterest among the Afrikaners or a deliberate omission among the non-government organisations to apply for funds as they were surviving on foreign donations at that time. It could also reflect conservatism among the farmers who did not have the welfare of their employees as a priority although many village people provided cheap labour on the farms.

It can be seen from the different forms of provision for educating adults that the Ministry of Education not only inherited a fragmented formal education, but also an uncoordinated sector in the adult education category. In order to provide and prioritise education for all, an incremental education programme was developed. The education policy was broadly considered a developmental process and not an end in itself as indicated in the quotation:

The development of policy is a learning process. The Ministry of Education's policies will evolve, and they will be open to correction, not through trial and error, but on the basis of a variety of academic, professional and consultative sources of critique and advice (White Paper, 1995: Chapter 1:7).

Although the Education White Paper was not regarded as a plan, it had set criteria and targets against which progress would be measured on an annual basis.

It was declared in the 1995 White Paper that continuous consultation would be encouraged:

participation of stakeholders from provincial ministries, technikons and universities will remain open (White Paper, 1995: Chapter 3:20).

and the proposals would be reviewed in the short and in the long term if

requested from any persons or bodies with interest in the learning process and learning outcomes (ibid.:27).

The expressed intention of the Ministry of Education to be open and flexible and prepared to make adjustments when necessary, was commendable. In addition, it was also made clear that the process of shaping policy should not only be 'academic', but should be 'developmental' (although the concepts are not fully explained). It was against this background that the ABET vision supported an 'ongoing discourse' in which 'systematic reflections' on the legislative and administrative practices could be encouraged.

However, the fact that there was room for openness to future adjustments, either signalled or confirmed that difficulties were anticipated in the process. Notwithstanding the willingness to encourage open participation, responsiveness to criticism and preparedness to make adjustments when necessary, there were many difficulties in the implementation of the ABET policy. Some of the inherent difficulties to be discussed in the next sections relate to the manner in which ABET was defined, its underlying framework and how the plan was managed and implemented.

It was indicated in the second chapter that, the conceptualisation and nature of adult basic education has changed over the last two decades. Around 1989 and into the 1990s concerned stakeholders debated and proclaimed the need for clearer definitions of adult basic education.

The initial ABET definitions in the working drafts (the first one March, 1997 report) defined the education of adults:

either literacy is defined as allowing individuals and groups to become generally functional in their own society, or literacy is defined as part of an economic strategy to promote higher productivity and to contribute to development (ABET, Policy 1997:5).

This policy statement gives a narrow understanding of ‘adult literacy’, yet it also implies that literacy includes numeracy and general education. It is seen that both numeracy and general education, form the basic core or ‘stepping stones’ or, a basic foundation for learning. Numeracy and general education are considered as life-learning processes that can support individuals toward career paths that will be certificated and recognised. This suggests that literacy is recognised as a necessity for individuals so that they can become more “functional” in an economic sense.

Whilst the debates continue about exactly what adult education means, the important question is whether literacy is about understanding the worlds people live in, discovering ‘really useful knowledge’ and developing critical thinking, or whether literacy is about gaining knowledge and skills for full participation in the economic development – acquiring ‘useful knowledge’. The definition above seems to aim at creating an environment in which individuals can become generally functional as part of an economic strategy. This suggests that any learner could acquire skills, techniques and knowledge with an uncritical mind: such forms of learning do not support the principles of adult education. Skills may be acquired, but their relevance may be questionable.

Such concerns sharpened the debates on ‘critical literacy’ vis-à-vis ‘functional literacy’. At the core of the debate, were issues of values, principles, targets, goals and nature of adult education in a changing society. The concerns for meaningful empowerment were raised, pioneered by Centres for Adult and Continuing Education in universities. The real meaning of empowerment was being debated among community-based practitioners, academia and the private sector associations. The

latter, among whom were the National Business Initiative, and individual companies like Transnet, (a transport and rail company), Eskom (the electricity supplying company) seemed to be more in favour of the technical and functional orientation. Academia offered theoretical and research-based insights into literacy practices as well as knowledge concerns about training needs of community based practitioners. Out of the intense discourse on the purpose and nature of adult education, a draft ABET document was prepared as a working document.

In it ABET was defined as:

the foundation for access and entry into Further Education and Training (FET) and employment opportunities and training (ABET, Policy 1997:iv).

Within a period of two years between 1995 and 1997 it can be seen that adult basic education changed from 'adult literacy' into a 'functional tool' described as adult basic education and training (Aitchison, 1999). Based on this concept an economic strategy is proposed as 'foundations for access' which prepares for entry to higher education levels or, employment or training which formed the final version for ABET:

the general conceptual foundation towards lifelong learning and development comprising of knowledge, skills and attitudes required for social, economic and political participation and transformation applicable to a range of contexts. ABET is flexible, developmental and targeted at the specific needs of particular audiences and ideally, provides access to a nationally recognised certificate (ABET Policy, 1997:6).

One can debate the areas of emphasis and intention between the above definition and what Prosser (1971) said about adult basic education and development. His view of adult education is that it is:

a process which in its ideal application helps society to determine its ends and which in the shortest possible time brings about the re-adjustment of human attitudes to facilitate change, evolving and imparting skills and techniques as part of the process (Prosser, 1971: 48).

There are common elements in the two definitions. Both see adult education programmes aimed at an adult population, and both have an aim that is to transform attitudes and behaviour. Prosser (1971) writes of a definite process that ideally should effect attitudinal change in society and these changes in attitude precede the process of acquiring skills and any new techniques that people may need. His definition addresses issues related to the sociology of knowledge, that the acquisition of some types of knowledge influence people's behaviour. Learners therefore decide what type of knowledge they need and for what. According to this definition changes of attitudes are a basis for increased interest in learning. It is from this experience that people will determine their goals and/or the type of changes they want for themselves and for their society. Such changes may occur throughout life and may involve different criteria of success in the context of adult education and ABET.

While ABET is 'a conceptual foundation for lifelong learning' which can be adapted for a number of contexts, its final impact is specifically measured through a certification process.¹⁶ Clearly the acquisition of knowledge and skills as well as new attitudes is imperative for a changing society. The call for full socio-economic and political participation cannot be overemphasised. However, to assume that the acquisition of skills and knowledge provides access to certification as if there is an automatic linear progression from learning to certification is misleading. Such an assumption also changes the values underlying education for adults.

According to Prosser (1971), although the goals of ABET can ideally be defined in advance, they are also inherently shaped in the process of assimilating and reflecting on knowledge in different contexts. For example, a specific context like the one in which this research was conducted, a rural environment, and with a specific group of women, raised questions about how the learners defined their educational goals and how they interpreted their experience of education. With the given aims and vision,

¹⁶ In Chapter 4:16, of the ABET Policy 1997, it is stated that the integration of ABET into life long learning makes it the first stage toward achieving the first General education and training band, the first certificate in terms of the National Qualifications Framework.

this chapter explores how the defined goals in the ABET policy may have or created an opportunity in which women can gather knowledge and skills, how women define their own experiences, reflect on them and consider the resultant impact on their lives.

In the light of these observations, it can be seen as that the goals of ABET seem to resonate with Kallaway's (1998) argument that, the 'new' goal for adult basic education (as defined in 1997 ABET policy document) is being tailored to the needs of world class expectations and that there is a reluctance 'to learn from the African experience of education in the post-colonial era'. His observation particularly relates to how the domination of codes from industrial countries works against development in rural communities. Kallaway sees "world class standards" as supportive of specialisation, with a focus upon technical standards, the preparation of managers and technicians as well as the production of elite graduates with sophisticated technical and educational skills.

It should be understood that South Africa does need "world class standards". However, it must address the reality at which the intended target population(s) begin their education and training – most frequently with little or no previous schooling. There are many women in rural areas who have not gone to school, or left after only a few years. They have low literacy levels. Their situations need to be redefined and understood from their own perspectives so that they can engage in learning which is basic, relevant and appropriate to the skills and knowledge they need rather than what is primarily defined and offered in narrow functional terms.

There are therefore difficulties inherent in the defined goals and linear assumptions of the ABET Policy. The essence of defining targets and goals for ABET was based on the imperative to change from the old 'paradigm' wherein learning happened by rote learning and teacher-centred processes, to an improved excellence in standards. This is seen as best advanced through student-centred, outcomes-based learning. But the main question remains, how is quality defined, who determined the standards on which good quality education can be assessed? In an attempt to establish the

standards, a common understanding of a quality education system, under which the ABET ‘curriculum’ is designed, needed to be established. Thus the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) developed by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) was constructed to promote “an integrated education and training” plan. It is a system in which learning would be integrated with the socio-economic and political spheres of people and it should be possible to measure the outcomes from what people are enabled to do.

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is a structure within which the parameters for organising the education curriculum are provided.

Its objectives are to:

- Create an integrated national framework for learning achievements.
- Facilitate access to, and mobility and progression within education, training and career paths.
- Enhance the quality of education and training.
- Accelerate the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and thereby employment opportunities.
- Contribute to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the nation at large (SAQA, 1998:1).

The NQF has programmes made up of modules, course units and learner options. In each *programme*, learners can progress through levels of qualifications. Qualifications from one level to another are credited if specific *descriptors*, that is, kinds of knowledge and skills that are expected are acquired. The qualification is assessed through outcomes, which are capabilities or competencies as evidence of learning. For general education the South African Qualifications Authority classifies outcomes from *learning fields*, and in ABET sector outcomes are derived from *learning areas*.

The NQF is a structure within which it is envisaged that the school curriculum as well as ABET can be adapted to suit different contexts. It is divided into eight levels of qualification with grades from level one to eight. The first level, the General Education Certificate level, is obtained after nine years of schooling. Parallel to these nine years is an equivalent adult education qualification stream that is divided into levels one to four. The beginners start at level one and qualify for external assessment and accreditation at level four. It is assumed that from level four learners can either

move vertically into further education or vocational training. If they are already in employment, it is envisaged that they can be rewarded with advanced credits enabling them to move horizontally within the area of their expertise in their careers. Level two to four is grouped under Further Education and Training and Level five to eight from the Tertiary level qualifications and post-doctoral or post-research qualifications.

The National Qualifications Framework

Level : 5 – 8 Higher Education and Training	
	Post Doctoral and Post research Studies Higher Degrees, Professional Qualifications
	First Degree, Higher Diploma
	Diplomas, Occupational Certificates
Level : 2 – 4 Further Education and Training Certificate	
An equivalent of Standard 10 or units from NGOs	College and Trade Certification.
Level: 1 General Education and Training Certificate	
ABET 4	Equivalent to 9 years of schooling
ABET 3	Equivalent to standard 5
ABET 2	Equivalent to standard 3
ABET 1	Equivalent to standard 1

In chapter three it was noted that the ‘old’ education system was characterised by prescribed curriculum and teacher-centred education, which, it was argued, it was not coherent at a national level. The division of education into nineteen departments, managed, controlled and financed separately added to the lack of coherence. Indeed, educational aims did not reflect a ‘shared’ vision for all South Africans as was the legal system at the time. The ‘new’ paradigm adopts an outcomes-based approach, a model of education which assumes that a shared goal of economic development can be achieved. Before expanding on the new outcomes-based approach, the underpinnings of the National Qualifications Framework require discussion as they direct the vision and emphasis for education broadly.

It has been argued in the government documents on reconstruction and educational development (de Lange, 1981; RDP:1994; Education White Paper 1995) that if South Africa is to improve its economy and its competitiveness, the development of its

people must be regarded as a priority. Thus human resource development forms the rationale for and a basic premise of education and training. Such assumptions underlie expectations that, South Africa will be able to compete economically through training and education once the standards of education are improved and better skills acquired; that the people will be able to contribute meaningfully to the economic growth of the country and the aim of transforming the country will thus be achieved.

Such notions about the 'utility and validity' in the NQF have been questioned by Donn (1998) as they indicate the narrow relationship between educational goals and the goals of the economic markets. According to Donn:

The emergence of a qualification authority may be seen as indicative of a changed focus – from formal knowledge to a stress on skills ahead of knowledge. ... All this occurs at times of economic and political crisis and change, a fact that forms the basis of a theoretical understanding of the rationales for the emergence, nature, structure and provisions of NQF (Donn,1998:73).

Thus, the pre-occupation with 'skills' overrides the significance of knowledge if only for its prescribed use. In addition, it is assumed that there is a linear relationship between education, training and economic growth. However, the danger here is that human resource development takes precedence over the human beings themselves; that human capacity is 'improved' through 'training', but not enriched.

The human resource development rationale forms the core of 'integrated model'. According to the 1995 White Paper on Education, Chapter 2 education and training are considered complementary and not separate:

...training is seen as a vital part of many learning programmes administered in schools, teacher colleges and technical colleges, technikons and in universities (White Paper, 1995:10).

One cannot know whether 'education' and 'training' are generally understood to mean the same thing and whether those affected by the concepts would be involved in similar types of activities or not. This statement merely locates the training

programme as an administrative process which is formal and official without articulating the fundamentals, its purpose and intent. If one thinks of schools as basic levels of education with less 'training' as distinct from technical colleges or universities which may have modules on training, the statement '...learning programmes administered in schools...' (White Paper, 1995) does not augur well for the future of education. Such a general statement does not answer questions about who will be trained, at which level training differs from education, the relationship of training to employment, whether there are prospects for employment, and whether the country needs training more than education.

The emphasis on 'training' can be traced to the end of the sixties when human labour had less influence on industrial relations (Petrella, 1997). Training, capacity building and human resource management were being used for increased productivity and management. Under the influence of management schools and the focus on productivity, human labour has been depersonalised. The technician, individualistic and mechanical competition driven market economy has desocialised individuals to become corporate assets. This mind set suggests that a skilled, trained and developed labourforce will contribute to a growing economy and perhaps an equitable society (Tlhagale, 1987; Kallaway, 1988; Petrella, 1997).

However, Petrella (1997) cautions that the more companies need skilled labour, the more likely they are to reduce the number of unskilled workers:

The priority attached to training and qualifications as the best admission ticket to labour market is operating against the human resource, imprisoning those with no or limited skills in a snare of precariousness, instability and exclusion and those who are well or highly qualified in a snare of golden servitude to the needs of enterprise (Petrella, 1997:24).

This means that social stratification between class and sex, skilled and unskilled workers is likely to increase and in the South African context the first targets could be individuals in the senior age category and women. Therefore, the effect of an overemphasis on skilled and trained citizens needs to be reconsidered.

Although the concepts 'education and training' are not separately defined in the 1995 White Paper on education they were endorsed in the ABET supportive statement that:

An integrated education system moves away from false, horizontal and rigid divisions between concepts such as 'academic' and 'applied', 'theory' and 'practice', 'knowledge' and 'skills' ... Consensus has been built between the Departments of Education and Labour and other stakeholders around the concepts of lifelong learning...(ABET, 1997:5).

Therefore it is assumed that through the opportunities created in the NQF, the learners will realise the importance of both informal and formal approaches to learning. It is within this conceptual framework that ABE was later referred to as adult basic education and training (ABET). However acceptable the definition of ABET may be, there remains the question of whether the education and training of people can contribute to economic development and whether education makes any country more competitive in the global market.

Other factors to be considered in determining the purpose of adult education are structural issues which in themselves may not immediately change as a result of a single education system. Although the past, racially discriminating education system was advantageous to the minority whites, it has not only resulted in the majority of people being unskilled but also produced a nation of largely uneducated and under-qualified individuals. This was a national and structural problem of the historical development of South Africa. According to the 1995 October Household survey, up to 68% of the population under 34 years of age was unemployed, and out of the total population, (41.9 million) up to 51% was functionally illiterate, a further 87% was not trained, while 69% had no previous job experience (Statistics, SA 1995-1996).

Figures for the subsequent year were not optimistic either. In 1996, 21% of the population over 20 years had no education, only 24% had primary education and just 34% acquired secondary education. During the same year, while there were potentially 12.7 million ABET learners only 2.1 million enrolled for adult education programmes (Statistics, SA 1996-1997).

In addition to the problems of illiteracy, it is argued that inequality between those in urban and rural areas and between male and female compounded the situation. Solutions must therefore be linked to problems manifest in the history of the people and the country. The new state needs to consider more vigorous, more relevant and imaginative programmes which do not only make people 'competent' by virtue of acquiring individual certification, or 'fit into' the modern technology, but also make provision for alternative programmes. The alternatives, in addition to formal programmes, would be innovative ways of learning without overemphasis on literacy as a 'gate-keeper to knowledge'. Such considerations for 'alternative' programmes were suggested in chapter one (Turok, 1995; Mayo, 1997 and Rodrik, 1999). They are particularly important for women in rural areas.

In the light of considering 'alternative' options for women in rural communities a number of considerations must be borne in mind. First, the acquisition of skills is not a quick process, especially for individuals who have not experienced any schooling at all. Second, programmes for adult learning do not fit into the scheduled time generally planned for acquiring certificates as in the formal schooling system. Thus the functionally illiterate (51%) and untrained (87%) groups will find it very difficult to fit into the culture of 'work'. Some learners may not be able to acquire the skills for immediate application and may remain unemployed in the future (Loots, 1998). This will be the case unless the economy of the country grows to absorb the 'newly' qualified and skilled people, particularly now when education is grounded in 'useful knowledge'. Therefore, education and training does not necessarily contribute to economic growth.

A related concern pertinent to the whole philosophical basis of education is whether education should be linked to, or be responsive to, labour demands. This is a question which points to the omission of the consideration of the historical consequences of adult education activities as outlined in the historical background in the second chapter. In the second chapter it was shown how the political aims as generally

understood, brought individuals together regardless of age, sex and educational backgrounds to work at collective objectives. The purpose for mobilising communities and educating them through informal 'people's education' as it was known, although not equally understood by everyone involved, shaped the philosophy for a shared goal. Thus it did not matter what criteria individuals or groups had for participating in 'people's education'. With the 'new' ABET policy, the intended goals may be understood, the usefulness of literacy accepted generally, however, some of the assessment measures for entry and qualification in ABET, are in themselves a form of elimination. A 'selected few' may be privileged to enter adult education, especially if they meet the skills requirements for entry into employment.

Apple (1982) has argued that the content of the hidden and overt curriculum in schools (need) not direct the expressions of economic needs. His argument stressed that although the function of education is to support processes that ultimately aim to transform society, and ultimately contribute to economic transformation, this understanding should not be based on 'simple functionality' of education. There are additional 'goal posts' in addition to economics, goals that fulfil cultural and political demands. The latter, encompassing critical, active society, has always been characteristic of adult education. In pursuance of these goals, however, Apple pointed out that cognisance should be taken of the power of the tripartite connections between economics, culture and politics and should not be under-estimated.

It can therefore be seen that in the 'new' ABET policy there are measures which serve a 'hidden' and contradictory emphasis and an assessment system in which individualistic processes of acquiring education are paramount. Each person is expected to display evidence of learned skills and acquired knowledge. Each, would be rewarded in the form of certificates based on set standards of performance which indicate movement from one level to another. The approach assumes that outcomes are automatic by intent: that is, a transformative learning process will occur because it is so desired by the learner.

Although the emphases in approaches may differ, an identifiable purpose need not be sacrificed or compromised. It is suggested that otherwise adult education loses its role in society. This is what von Kotze (1998) refers to as the 'identity'. The political ideologies and motives that drove the mass movement in the late 1980s were different from those of the governing state. Individuals inside and outside the country shared a 'common identity' and a 'common commitment' during a 'crisis' period to challenge and overthrow an illegitimate government (Taylor, 1998). It was seen as a 'crisis' period according to Taylor, because the urge for change was so deep that there was no option but to break the old order. At a political level, apartheid was to be dismantled, at a practical level resources were sought and at a physical level there were inspirations for an improved quality of life (Taylor, 1998).

All these factors therefore, show that the manner in which education has been reformed and conceptualised after 1994 has changed emphasis from a politically liberating agenda to one with an economic focus as espoused in the 1995 Education White Paper. The 'identity' or the 'urge' for 'holistic development' has changed as more emphasis is laid on 'training', 'outcomes' and 'competence'. These changes in emphasis can be discovered out from the statements directing how the teaching and ABET materials will be assessed:

Because the curriculum framework emphasises the outcomes of learning *rather* than the means or ways of learning, learners will be able to attain the learning outcomes through a wide variety of contexts. Learners will be able to attain these outcomes at different rates of learning in a wide and rich variety of programmes developed at national, provincial and local levels (ABET Policy, 1997:18).

Outcomes are further defined as 'the contextually demonstrated end-product of the learning process' which suggests that unless 'demonstrable' evidence (in action and thought) can be assessed from '*descriptors*' then learning has not occurred. Outcomes are assessed by what the learner achieves and not on the basis of the syllabus or what is taught by the teacher (ABET Policy, 1997). It is, therefore, implied that what the learners are able to do is not necessarily tied in to the 'curriculum' but 'through a wide

range of experiences encountered in a variety of contexts'. Seven critical cross-field education outcomes, have been identified in the policy document.

These are:

- Identify and solve problems in which responses display that responsible decisions using critical and creative thinking have been made.
- Work effectively with others as a member of the team, group, organisation and or community.
- Organise and manage oneself and one's activities responsibly and effectively.
- Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information.
- Communicate effectively using visual, mathematical and or language skills in the modes of oral and or written presentation.
- Use science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environments and health of others.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation (ABET Policy, 1997:19).

Before discussing the OBE model which in von Kotze's (1998) opinion has lost its 'identity', the differences between outcomes, objectives and impact will be briefly considered because the conceptual understanding of the concepts determines how adult learners can be assessed.

According to Rogers (1992) "outcomes", refer to expected or unexpected results of actions(s) or inaction. They can be by-products of an event, a course or a programme, which are either planned or unplanned. In a basic numeracy course, the learner outcome would be the acquisition of numeracy skills, and the ability to recognise numbers and the capacity to apply them in context. An "objective" refers to the purpose of the programme, that which is aimed at – that is, the goal. Reduction of weight and diseases might form one of the objectives of a nutrition programme; but the number of learners in a programme or the numbers of those who finish the programme are not an outcome but a criterion with which to evaluate the programme, as well as being a measure of the level of participation.

In terms of the ABET Policy, a conceptual weakness refers to the observation that outcomes do not address 'intended and unintended consequences' of learning, or

‘planned or unplanned by-products’ but focus on ‘intended consequences’ or what is termed the critical cross-field education outcomes as listed above. Also, the ‘means or ways of learning’ seem not to take precedence, yet learning is about processes as well as mediums and methods.

Outcomes and impacts are not synonymous, although they are generally used interchangeably. Impact refers to a total transformation of being. When two objects are added together they make two, but when two cells are put together they transform into a new object. Impact must define a process of change that will include an intentional assessment of the nature and consequences of processes. It is an assessment through reflection, a process in which individuals assess their beliefs, ideas or feelings Mezirow (1991). This takes comparing the situation or status at the origins of an event then reflecting on the processes and the premise for taking action. The process would focus on strategic thrusts, structures, tactics and the theory, the roles and feelings; while the premise consists of the critical reflections and judgement of why programmes are run (Rogers, 1992).

Following the opinions of Mezirow (1991) and Rogers (1992), for adult education to be impactful and developmental, it should identify what is desirable, be based on the values and visions of the communities, and therefore have as its main goal, an identifiable impact which can be assessed. Impact, according to the authors, is looking not only at the changes in the lives of individual learners, but also at transformative changes as a consequence of learning. If in adult education the objectives are to meet the aspirations of people on the programme, their ‘needs’ should be well identified as distinct from what they ‘want’. Objectives may be planned, anticipated or unforeseen. They can also be realised immediately, delayed or not achieved at all. The above principles thus form the parameters for analysing the extent to which the outcomes-based education model fulfils or limits the goals in educating adults.

However, there are many limitations to the OBE model. Jansen (1998) has made observations about why the current outcomes-based curriculum is 'the most ambitious policy' an observation shared by McGrath, (1997). Rather than focussing on the working of the policy, Jansen based his argument on the historical origins, the operational assumptions and the process expected to make the model a success. In his critique, Jansen (1998) indicated that the 'policy is being driven in the first instance by political imperatives which have little to do with the realities of the classroom life'. Classroom life for adult education and educators would include factors like "Learning Areas" which in rural communities are still primary schools where adults sit on low chairs, electricity supply is limited and sometimes lessons take place under the shade of trees. Teaching and learning material is only sometimes available depending on the initiative of the teacher. Such practices are drawn and adapted from the early seventies when learning was provided through the work of the social movements. Yet these practices are still prevalent in the current situation. Teachers are not only battling with material conditions, in Jansen's opinion, but also have quickly to learn and understand the 'confusing and contradictory' concepts, meanings and priorities in the OBE model.

Jansen further questions the neo-conservative element assumed in the outcomes-based curriculum, which envisaged skills training and skill acquisition as having a positive contribution and a relationship to economic growth. As was argued by Apple (1982) in the preceding paragraphs, the limitations of linking educational goals for labour demands is futile.

A further weakness according to Jansen (1998) is that outcomes-based curriculum assumes the teachers have an overall understanding of a transformational education system. However, policy implementation requires not only a practical understanding, but a deep philosophical comprehension of its intent and its theoretical underpinning. If teachers are to deliver a 'new' programme what they need is not only individual capacity to teach, but to have a grasp of why there should be a paradigm shift. They must understand and own the intended goals, so that they can, as one of the

stakeholders, contribute progressively to shaping, achieving and reviewing, the intended goals. In support of these reservations, McKerman (1994) said that outcomes-based education is 'instrumentalist' as it shifts from a 'movement predicated by process' to a 'product-focussed' policy, an opinion endorsed by Nolutshungu (1982).

The latter saw the loss of autonomy by the South African mass movement of the eighties to the technicist emphasis, as the subordination of politics to economics. Such changes link well to the arguments put forward by, among others, Ball (1993) who argues that education is surrounded by market alternatives which determine the agenda for education.

His arguments challenge the effects of market forces on schools and on and the effects of these for parents:

There is now in educational policy a well-established, powerful and complex ideology of the market and a linked culture of choice which are underpinned by dangerous idealisations about the workings of the markets, the effects of parental choice and of 'profit' incentives in education (Ball, 1993:3).

The new ideology of the 'market' was propagated on the rationale that parents would have a choice, that education offers individual opportunities to make choices and that a competitive culture creates entrepreneurial attitudes. This argument, Ball found flawed, because it would create class advantages, inequalities wherein others are 'winners' while many are 'losers'. In similar ways, the socio-political changes in South Africa have altered the politics of education to educational politics which give teachers, let alone parents, limited choices on what their main role is. The new ideology tends to reduce teachers to mere administrative machinery concerned with what to teach, how it should be taught rather than with why they teach. In this way the vigilant and inquisitive mindset that underlay the radical education has been subordinated to conform to the new OBE-based demands of ABET.

Finally, Jansen (1998) raised concerns about the inevitable administrative burden that would be placed on educators as they worked through assessment procedures, performance criteria, in-service-training requirements in addition to monitoring the time for planning, marking and actual teaching, as well as all the other expected tasks. The added administrative tasks require increased capacity and preparation to deal with personal evaluations as each of the teachers prepare for performance assessments. As educators continue with teaching they have to conform to the specified 'fields of learning' defined in the ABET policy document and also adhere to the performance standards against which they may be required to be individually evaluated. This is indeed a technicist approach to learning; highlighting tasks and skills rather than bodies of knowledge.

Moreover, in support of the 'instrumentalist' and 'task' oriented demand on teachers, Collins (1990) and Grabowski (1991) agree that the outcomes-based model is driven by capitalist ideologies which emphasise 'managerial efficiency' in the education system. According to the authors, the rationale for 'professionalisation' of education is ultimately to gain profit. Although OBE is a 'learner centred' approach based on the 'human resource capital' theory, Collins points out that it detracts from the importance of the ethical agency of the teachers and reduces them to instruments of labour and productivity. A further argument by the authors is that 'professionalisation' of adult education has not been known to provide jobs; instead it diverts educators from other forms of organisation that could be empowering for themselves and for the learners.

Having recognised the potential limitations of putting the adult basic education and training plan into operation, Jansen (1998) made some recommendations: first, there is a need to sustain political mobilisation among anti-capitalist forces that is, encouraging a counter hegemony. This calls for expressions of different opinions; of collective critical and constructive voices that can present alternative recommendations and/or rejections if any new policies are put forward. For example

the South African NGO Coalition (SANGOCO) prepared a report on poverty in 1999 from which recommendations for an action plan were made. The report also highlighted the relationships between poverty and illiteracy. Another 'alternative voice', the Community Constituency in the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC) organised a national conference analysing the labour and employment scenario in South Africa in October 1988. One of the major recommendations asserted by the Community Constituency in the NEDLAC was that 'the government is willing to adjust the rigid aspects of the Growth Employment and Redistribution policy (GEAR)¹⁷ in favour of the Reconstruction and Development (RDP)' and that 'women should be more actively and assertively represented in NEDLAC' (COSATU, 1998).

One may note that the National Development Agency which represents in the main the non-government structures, has potential to voice the concerns of the marginalised voices of women and other disadvantaged groups outside government. Such recommendations, if heeded to constructively, can form room for 'counter hegemony'.

The second recommendation by Jansen (1998) was that the vision of ABET be developed to articulate the curriculum, the role of languages and clarity on lines of authority and accountability while also making provision for policy alternatives. Perhaps the Independent Examinations Board (IEB) which co-ordinates and runs alternative examinations independent of the state, is on course to promote an examination function independent of the state's influence. Lastly, Jansen (1998) recommended that the interministerial council between Labour, Education and Welfare departments should be consolidated and its authority clarified. All of these Ministries serve the welfare needs of the country and are highly dependent on literacy levels and efficiencies. If an inter-ministerial council is established financial resources can be shared, and a common understanding of a transformed society can be

¹⁷ See Chapter 1, page 18 a brief explanation of GEAR: The macro-economic framework that replaced the Reconstruction and Development Programme Plan. GEAR supports fiscal efficiency to an extent that financial resources for education may be in jeopardy.

forged. For a long time the council was given an advisory role yet what is required is a full mandate with strong recommendations if holistic development across sectors is espoused. Horizontal co-ordination among ministries should reflect the political will to have a curriculum deeply rooted in the interests of all stakeholders, including the mass democratic movement. In this way adult education may play a significant role in the transformation of society.

The essence of the discussion so far has been about the difficulties inherent in the conceptualisation, the definition and the philosophical assumptions on which the ABET goals were set. In addition to the conceptual issues, at a practical level the exclusion of 'significant others' – the concerns and issues for women were, according to Unterhalter (1998), glaringly omitted in the ABET programme. This argument is discussed as one of the major weaknesses of the policy.

Unterhalter (1998) analysed the framework within which economic rationalisation was propagated by the private sector and COSATU on the one hand, while on the other COSATU, in conjunction with the African National Congress, also promoted social justice on the other. She further argued that, although historically there had been a strong women's movement in South Africa prior to and during the democratic transition, the movement had had little impact on the formulation of education policy. The contradictory model highlights issues of whether gender education is taken seriously at all in the decision-making processes, and whether gender equality should be addressed outside or within the mainstream education plans.

Her analysis was based on the model raised by Rai and Lievesley (in Unterhalter, 1998). In this model options available in the politics of organisational culture were examined and questions raised about whether gender equality can be better achieved by working inside or outside state structures. Rai and Lievesley's starting point was to investigate whether it is important to have a separate and visible women's organisation or to support an interplay of forces between the state, the civil society and capitalist development. What was inevitable in the changing phases for South

Africa, was the constant shift of emphasis of interests among each of the constituencies and power relations became dispersed as each formed alliances with the others.

For example, it was shown in the second chapter, how women had been instrumental in preparing the Women's Charter as an all-inclusive entity under the umbrella of Women's Coalition. Unterhalter (1998) affirms (as discussed earlier in chapter three) that the deliberations until 1993 on the NQF emerged from a compromise among the black and white trade unions, the ANC, COSATU and the National Training Board. The stakeholders had to acknowledge the inadequacies of the education systems in the past decades. They agreed on an integrated training system based on social justice and economic rationality. In the period following this, 1994 to 1996, Unterhalter notes the 'convergence and emergence of specific groupings like COSATU, the Private Sector Initiative, the Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD) and the National Training Board as key policy players all holding corporatism as a consensual objective.

At the same time, the author points out that the ANC had to be seen underwriting the concerns of the state and thus shifted its balance from concerns for social development to a position of supporting economic rationality. It would be an illusion to think that any of the stakeholders, in this case the ANC government and its alliances, COSATU and the Communist Party would treat all other 'significant players' equally. Thus the policy was entrapped in its contradictions and had a bearing on the feasibility and the realisation of the intended practical goals (Carnoy et al., 1990). However, Unterhalter questions whether there was lack of intention by the state, or whether there exists 'hidden curricula' in how the NQF was 'grafted' into the capitalist vision of transformation (Unterhalter, 1998).

It is Unterhalter's argument that throughout the period leading to the democratic elections in 1994 there was no attempt to consult or incorporate the specific views of the women's constituencies, although the Women's National Coalition was assertive

in shaping the Women's Charter during the same period. COSATU too had taken the lead in raising gender issues in most of its training and research programmes. Their commitment to gender equality was indirectly indicated in their logo of a woman's head-wrap on some of their newsletters. However, one of the main weaknesses was that they adopted a descriptive way of analysing gender relations in the state, civil society and the family. Gender was 'conceptualised in quantitative terms' looking at how many women and in what positions they were, and not on how human relations are constructed. The Centre for Education Policy Development, on the other hand, adopted a human rights emphasis but this was not explicit on gender, race or social divisions. Indeed, their statement 'the development of human potential so that they can perform' indicates just this gender neutrality. The National Training Board proposed 'an adjustment of our workforce through integration', while the private sector called for 'portability of credits across the binary divide in higher education' (Unterhalter, 1998:356–359). It can be concluded that gender education was conceived differently by each of the mentioned structures. As a result of different emphases and incoherent understandings, women's concerns were marginalised.

It can be seen that whatever form of an ABET plan was to be put in place, first, a shared understanding of its goals was necessary. In addition alternative programmes needed to be delineated so that they could be strategically relevant to the needs of wider constituencies. Consultations with wider constituencies make real the notion of 'integrated' education. Such consultations focus on 'training' for employment, but also integrate the cultural, oral, traditional, artistic and contemporary forms of knowledge. According to Unterhalter, although ABET aimed to create access based on principles of equity, it fell short on how to address the needs of women, of those unemployed women and those in rural communities.

If indeed the 'new' education policy aimed to be 'transformative', the issue of whether there was space to implement the current (and indeed) future educational programmes for women require to be resolved. It is on this basis that education for

women is linked to their overall struggle. Manzini (1997) affirmed the words of three African leaders, Sankara, Machel and Nyerere when she said that:

democratisation and the renewal process in South Africa will be incomplete if half of its population is in bondage. Moreover, to exclude half of the continent's population from the process of social transformation will not necessarily be a transformation, but an entrenchment and perpetuation of male values (Manzini, 1997:6).

The position of women and whether they are full participants in the process of transformation cannot be left unchallenged. The role of women in South Africa and particularly through adult education is, one might argue a case study in marginalisation.

The national survey conducted (Harley et al, 1996) on the status of education confirms that, indeed, half the adult population in South Africa may be unable to make meaningful contributions to decisions that affect their lives because they have not had the opportunity to participate in adequate education. Considering that the previous statistical surveys were racially biased and sometimes did not include learners on farms and remote rural communities, the information that will be used is primarily after 1994 for two reasons. First, because it was the first national non-racial and an all-inclusive survey conducted after the first democratic elections. Second, because it was the significant period (from 1995) during which the new changes for a non-racial education system were introduced.

It is important to locate the demographic context of African women in South Africa and Mpumalanga where the research took place. According to the 1996 population census, [although the Census was conducted in 1996 the release of the statistics occurred on the 20th October 1998 with some adjustments. The author does not have responsibility over the errors in the statistics indicated with ** on each Table], (abridged in Table 4.3(a)) the overall population size in South Africa was 40,583 573 and by 1998 it had increased to 42, 279 000. The main groupings can be divided into Africans (77%), White, (11%) Coloured (9%) and Indian (3%).

Table 4.4 (a) Population of South Africa: urban and non-urban divide **

Provinces	Urban	Non-urban
E/Cape	2 233	4 363
F/State	1 849	892
Gauteng	7 404	205
K/Natal	4 145	4 601
Mpumalanga	1138	1788
N/Cape	603	265
N/Province	614	4 581
N/West	1 182	2 327
W/Cape	3 697	393
S Africa	22 865	19 415

Source: South Africa, Statistics October 1996-1998

Table 4.4 (b) Population of South Africa: by gender **

Provinces	Male	Female	Total
E/Cape	2 908 056	3 394 969	6 302 526
F/State	1 298 348	1 335 156	2 633 504
Gauteng	3 750 845	3 597 578	7 348 423
K/Natal	3 950 527	4 466 493	8 417 020
Mpumalanga	1 362 028	1 438 683	2 800 711
N/Cape	412 681	427 639	840 320
N/Province	2 253 072	2 676 296	4 929 368
N/West	1 649 835	1 704 990	3 354 825
W/Cape	1 935 494	2 021 381	3 956 875
S Africa	19 520 886	21 063 185	40 583 573

Source: South Africa, Statistics October 1996-1998

According to Table 4.5 (next page) in 1996, some 4,066 187 or 21% of the total population over the age of 20 years had no schooling.

Table 4.5 Level of education by gender among those aged 20 years or more by province (numbers) **

	Eastern Cape	Free State	Gauteng	Kwazulu- Natal	Mpuma- langa	Northern Cape	Northern Province	North West	Western Cape	South Africa
No schooling	22%	17%	9%	25%	32%	21%	41%	23%	6%	21%
Male	244,416	111,254	215,729	370,111	173,490	47,188	252,673	196,177	77,819	1,688,858
Female	373,380	124,895	203,428	587,106	236,846	50,503	518,914	206,966	75,290	2,377,329
Total	617,796	236,149	419,157	957,217	410,337	97,692	771,587	403,143	153,109	4,066,187
Some primary	21%	16%	9.3%	23%	29%	25%	37%	23%	7%	19%
Male	286,561	165,788	284,351	315,547	105,801	45,665	112,339	185,279	183,116	1,684,447
Female	348,914	162,288	232,273	432,039	105,415	48,905	139,948	179,018	179,168	1,827,968
Total	635,475	328,076	516,624	747,586	211,216	94,570	252,287	364,297	362,284	3,512,415
Complete primary										
Male	105,042	62,452	150,150	122,329	47,018	17,679	52,475	65,707	92,159	715,010
Female	159,194	67,857	145,494	156,106	48,765	21,899	71,902	73,296	112,252	856,765
Total	264,236	130,309	295,644	278,435	95,783	39,578	124,377	139,003	204,411	1,571,775
Source:	South		Africa,		Statistics,		October		1996-98	

In addition only 13,512 415 or 19% had some primary education. According to “The Survey of Adult Basic Education in South Africa in the 1990” people in those two categories were classified illiterate (Harley et al., 1996). People with fewer than seven years of schooling or an equivalent of standard five were also defined as illiterate. It had been estimated in 1996 by Harley et al (1996) that 7.5 million people were illiterate, a figure confirmed in the 1998 Census report that 7, 578 602 people had only acquired up to primary education or Level 3.

It can be seen, again from Table 4.5 that the educational positions of South Africans broadens at the base of the pyramid of educational qualifications, at the lowest levels of literacy (almost 4,066 187 or 21% out of the adult population that that had no schooling at all). On average, all the provinces with higher proportions of African people (Eastern Cape, KwaZulu/Natal, Mpumalanga, Northern Province and North West) also reflect percentile distribution [22%; 25%; 32%; 41% and 23%] more than 21% (national) of people over 20 years who have had no schooling and 29% only had primary education.

If Mpumalanga province is analysed distinctly from the four provinces, the problem of illiteracy is not to be tolerated. About 32% out of a population of 2.8 million have not been to school and 29% have only some primary education. Over half the population is women, and the majority of the citizens (89%) are Africans, it can be concluded that African women are the majority of the illiterate category. Some of these women lived through the liberation struggle as discussed in the third chapter. Their numbers and commitment stands in contrast to the provision of educational resources at all levels in this region. This was as a result of the previous racial discrimination and subsequent former homeland policies.

For example none of the 21 universities (excluding the overseas satellite universities) in the country is located in Mpumalanga. Some of these tertiary institutions were instrumental in the early 1990s in promoting and supporting the development of adult education, while others established adult education programmes and outreach centres

for gender studies, (for example, in the University of Western Cape, Durban, Pietermaritzburg and the Witwatersrand).

The pioneers of feminist pedagogy in South Africa were first introduced to the literature of feminism by the listed university centres for adult education. They were concerned with research and development about adult education and about the training of teachers. In addition, few technikons, companies and non-government organisations supported Outreach programmes on adult education. Mpumalanga, mainly dominated by teacher training institutions, does not have a university, and is also limited in Outreach centres for community development. If such centres had existed they could have enhanced the experiences gained in the liberation struggles in adult education as well as serving as resource bases for research on adult education. Many of the qualifying candidates from the teacher training institutions generally specialised in primary and secondary education levels. None of the teacher training programmes were tailored for teaching adults.

Therefore the limited resources in education as well as lack of specialisation in adult education in Mpumalanga province reflect the low percentage of individuals who have acquired education qualifications. For example, only 4.8% of the population of Mpumalanga have tertiary qualifications, 14% have some primary education but 29% have had no schooling (Statistics SA, 1996).

Given that human resource development was one of the Government's priorities, it thus necessitated a major plan to address the illiteracy situation in this province and in the country as a whole. A Multi-Year Plan for ABET was thus put in place. It was an incremental phased-in process divided according to functions.

The ABET Multi-Year Implementation Plan by the Department of Education

The ABET programme was implemented through provincial departments by following the Multi-Year Plan. There were two phases in the plan, the first was scheduled to begin in 1998 – 1999 and the second from year 2000 to 2001. It was a plan co-ordinated by the ABET Directorate which is administered by the Directorate of Adult Basic, Vocational and Distance Education and Training. Although the government is primarily responsible for putting the adult education system in place, the private sector has been charged with responsibility for people in full time employment.

Because the Directorate inherited a sector that was previously disintegrated and fragmented, with no base line data, their first concern during the first phase, 1998 to 1999, was to develop structures and systems. The second phase 2000 to 2001 was envisaged to be a full scale provision. During the first phase, the Directorate advertised for tenders to conduct the quantitative surveys in each province. In addition, as the National Literacy Co-operation (NLC, the largest ABET coordinating agency) was closed in 1998, a survey on the ‘provision and the state of the art’ regarded as a ‘quick and self-critical look at the ABET field’ (Aitchison, 1999a) was conducted. From 1998 onwards, the National Department of Education introduced the Cascade Model for training. This was carried out throughout the provinces by consulting agencies. Preparations for writing the rest of the learning areas for Levels 1 – 4 were underway by mid 1999 as well as the evaluative measures for assessment through the Standard Setting Bodies (Fine, 2000). An incremental growth targeting 2.5 million adults was envisaged by the year 2001.

The vision outlined in the Multi-Year Plan is for ‘a literate South Africa within which all its citizens will have acquired basic education and training that enables effective participation in socio-economic and political processes to contribute to reconstruction, development and social transformation’ (ABET, 1997: 9).

The vision is supposed to be realised by

- raising the basic educational foundation to prepare entry into further education.
- putting into operation the National Qualification Framework;
- creating access for all learners, recognising what they can achieve or have achieved. Access also refers to expanding opportunities for choice; and
- measuring with quantitative indicators the extent to which objectives of the ABET plans are met (ABET, 1997:10).

The overall national aims are listed in the executive summary as

to provide general (basic) education and training to adults for access to further education and training and employment (ABET Policy.:v). In achieving this aim, the following national sub-objectives are to be met

- a significant increase in national provisioning
- a significant increase in the numbers of learners enrolled in the system
- a significant increase in the numbers of learners being retrained within the system
- a significant increase in the numbers of learners successfully obtaining credits and certificates
- the implementation of a national monitoring and evaluation system
- the implementation of a national quality assurance system (ibid.:vi).

Although there is no curriculum per se in ABET, there are eight core areas - *Learning Areas* to be taught at all levels. In addition, there are electives, which can be adapted to the contexts of learners. Literacy, numeracy and general education forms the basic core of the learning areas, but external assessment includes the listed sub-objectives described earlier. These are tied to the Learning areas: mathematical literacy, mathematics and mathematical sciences, human and social sciences, natural sciences, technology; economic and management sciences; life orientation and arts and culture. Learners are assessed at Levels 1, 2 and 3 internally by the providing agency then qualify for external assessment at Level 4 and are accredited in accordance with the National Qualification Framework standards. Specific level *descriptors* define the

kinds of knowledge and skills necessary for qualification as laid out by the South African Qualifications Act of 1995 (ABET, 1997:19).

The ABET Multi-Year Plan forms a major part of the educational drive: the Ithuteng Campaign,¹⁸ which aimed to encourage a culture of learning. Although the original idea of (Thousand Learner Unit Plan) was conceptualised by the NLC in 1997, to recruit at least 1000 adult learners per province, the idea was supported structurally and financially by the Department of Education. This resulted in 130,000 new learners in 1998. That figure amounts to about 1% of the 12 million illiterate adults, according to the June Status Report (Asmal, 1999). It can be seen that the output during the first years of the Multi-Year Plan was hampered by a number of difficulties.

Weaknesses in the Multi-Year Plan

First, the danger with the Multi-Year strategy is that it assumes that the need for adult education is constant and will grow as the nation is mobilised. While the goals of education and of ABET are well articulated, and seem relevant to the new democracy, they also seem to fit into an agenda which assumes that the development of education for the capitalist market will lead to social justice. Although the importance of literacy and information technology cannot be overemphasised, it is also important to recognise that different forms of knowledge and cultural reorientation are essential to fulfil the aims of ABET.

It is further argued that the individualistic and competitive western values contradict the cultural tradition of a nation that has been characterised by diverse cultures, unequal access to formal education and largely by communal traditions. It is a tradition exemplified by a close interweaving of informal education with culture and strong socialisation to a collective group. This communalism has been seen largely to begin at

¹⁸ Ithuteng Campaign was launched by the Minister of Education in 1998 to recruit and to pilot the Interim Guidelines on the Outcome Based Education model.

home, within peer groups (*thakaneng* in SeSotho) and in community groups (*letsema or kgotla*).

Much of the teaching was not confined to a specially built or designated structure such as a school or a college, but took place in an informal and open environment. In this way traditional knowledge, wisdom and a desire for a lifelong learning were imparted as a continuing process starting from the smallest units and extending to the wider society. Education was, therefore, very practical in conception and in methodology and it was oriented toward problem solving at individual and communal levels (Mugo, 1999; Maloka, 1999).

Second, the Multi-Year plan further assumes that the planned activities would fall into place as envisaged. For example the ABET unit standards and learning materials were to be completed in 1999. However, progress in writing support material for ABET (as in education generally) has shown that:

Information from the provinces shows that the grade seven training materials brought out by the national department in 1999 were hardly used by teachers, because of the poor quality of the materials and lack of proper trainingThe OBE model was criticised by the Minister of Education, as jargon-heavy and complex version handed down to teachers, and in his own words “objected to the gross distortions and flourishing of myths” (Garson, 2000:1).

Although the pilot phase of the new curriculum framework was financially supported from the National Education budget, the limited budget set aside for ABET was inadequate. Although there had been an incremental projection of the education budget over five years, in 1998/99 the amount decreased from R46.8 billion to R43 billion in 1999/2000, a critical period for putting the Multi-Year Plan into operation.

Three key factors were presented by the present Minister to explain how additional money could be raised on a decreased budget. First, through the redeployment of teachers, personnel costs were reduced as teachers were placed in some geographical locations that were previously financially and physically disadvantaged. Second, the

deliberate and firm systems to eliminate fraud and corruption in the education system were established. Finally, there was determination to increase efficient management systems in education as a whole.

While at national level there are positive reinforcements to the plans, implementation in the provinces was delayed by a number of factors. As already indicated in chapter three, only 1% of national education budget allocated to ABET to be shared by all nine provinces. In addition, school education and ABET progress in the provinces were affected by lack of management capacity. Another problem identified in 1999 was lack of financial control systems:

Provincial budget management has been a major project of the national and provincial budgets of education. The painful process of correcting for the extremely high, largely unbudgeted increases in education spending in 1996/97 is still an important factor in the budget process of most provinces. The dramatic increase in the baseline of education expenditure in that year was not sustainable. Consequently, there has been a real annual decline in total education expenditure from 1996/97 to 1999/2000 (Asmal, 2000:5).

Besides administrative and financial difficulties the third problem inherent in the Multi-Year Plan is the content of ABET - curriculum issues not easily resolvable. The 'new' ABET is underpinned by principles that advocate and encourage a flexible, adaptable, accessible, fair, and integrated approach to learning. Such principles could perhaps be better realised if financial resources were adequate and teachers well trained. However, factors of finance, capacity, moral value and divided alliances are likely to hamper the implementation of ABET. The response to demands in the market world, as well as the reaction to both external and internal obligations, suggest that the Department of Education has embarked on a Multi-Year programme from the bottom of 'a steep slope'.

The challenges relating to curriculum focus were also affected by the decentralisation processes whereby Provincial ministries administered their budgets independent of the

National office for the first time in 1997/98 financial year. It was envisaged that the decentralised programme could be crystallised through the appointment of a Literacy Campaign director in June 2000.

This a political drive central to the government goals, need to heed the observations that:

A campaign or large-scale literacy programme is an organised large-scale series of activities which need personal material and financial resources. A national government will provide these resources only if universal adult literacy is indeed considered central to the achievement of overall national developmental goals (Bhola, 1983: 12).

It is yet to be seen what the results of the literacy campaign, under the auspices of the National Literacy Agency, will yield in terms of remotivating the nation towards an understanding of the importance of literacy.

The previous sections have explained the premise, priorities, aims and goals defined in the ABET plan. Changes of meaning from 'adult literacy' to 'adult and further education' and finally ABET were also discussed. The overriding framework that provides the parameters for the 'outcomes based education model' and its limitations were presented. Also outlined, were the management processes and the ABET structures responsible for the implementation of the incremental Multi-Year plan over a five year period. The complex issues of integration of training for employment was a priority, but a number of weaknesses seem to work against this. Most particularly are the weaknesses and gaps in the policy linked to the changing nature, changing emphases and subsequent failure to attract and meet the needs of specific target groups, notably women in Mpumalanga.

The vision for ABET has been seen to have a clear goal, which was the creation of an enabling framework within which ABET could flourish. It was a guide for all those involved in the sector and not a prescriptive process. It was an open process from which all ensuing experiences were to be considered. This has allowed room for debates and for reflection and has been developmental in nature. The vision about

ABET has provided a framework based on principles of access, equity and redress, all of which have been accepted and supported.

However, within a very short time there has been a shift of emphasis on these ABET goals. Whereas, in its earlier version, adult education and training was integrated with life-long learning, it has now been integrated into socio-economic and political spheres. It is based on an assumption that once people are trained in technical and political understanding they will be enabled to operate as effective political beings with an understanding of socio-economic factors which influence their lives. The policy seems suddenly to be silent about stated imperatives concerning social justice except to assume that issues of redress and equity will be addressed as political concerns. This is an affirmation of Dale's (1982) contention that there are inevitably contributions and contradictions with education in capitalist states. He argues that education begins to serve the systems of the economy, and thus the needs of the economy gain priority over social and humanitarian needs. He further notes that there is less concern about political questions, but more attention to processes of decision-making – particularly to economic decisions.

Because the policy has shifted into capitalist ideologies whose practice emphasises 'efficiency' it has become result oriented. The results are measured against 'outcomes' or 'competencies' that a number of theorists have found problematic. Collins (1990) for example, advanced the limitations of the competency-based model which had been introduced in the 1970s in the United States. He argued that they promoted a 'cult of efficiency'. Such paradigms, he said, support a functional curriculum designed to fit well with the technological world. Their origins in the United States were envisaged to link the world of work and the world of schooling.

As a result, the curriculum was narrowly defined with restricted emphasis on pre-packaged modules. Another opinion was that 'efficiency' models tend to encourage 'professionalisation' in which the role of the teacher was narrowly defined to that of a facilitator who co-ordinated learning activities or, at times, facilitated learning through

computers. This was seen as a process which reduced educators to performing a simplistic series of tasks without creative innovations (Jackson, 1989; Jansen et al, 1999).

The Multi-Year Plan may therefore be seen to embody contradictions between principles of independent learning and predetermined educational goals. The fact that teachers were to be introduced to a new paradigm of teaching and a new curriculum, presupposes that they acquired some form of 'professional' standards of teaching. They would then be expected to use prepared material in the eight Learning Areas because the external examinations would be set accordingly.

Conclusion

The argument in this chapter is that ABET policy goals were altered in the process of implementation by the power of the state (Prosser, 1971) by adapting to 'world class' standards (Kallaway, 1997) and thus losing identity (von Kotze, 1998). In the shifting process, the greatest negative outcome was the marginal positioning of women (Unterhalter, 1998). Women do not have direct influence and representation regardless of their past influential roles in political history. Consequently, the decisions that are made cannot articulate their specific needs and specific agenda.

The chapter has also shown that although the primary objective of the state is to uphold democracy, welfare systems and a growing market, it tends to fail to maintain the equilibrium between the needs of society as it responds to demands of the market economy. As the 'new' education and indeed ABET is redefined it seems to fail to address all the needs of its target groups. Such omissions have relegated women, in particular, to a marginal status regardless of the significant roles that they have played in bringing about change in the country.

There were therefore certain crucial factors that were dominant in effecting changes in education in 1995, when the first single education system for South African was

instituted. The rationale for a 'new' programme, known as ABET was explained in the chapter, the framework which supports human resource development, its rationale and its assumptions were discussed as contributory factors to the peripheral status of women. The chapter has also shown how the paradigms changed from life-long learning and empowerment into ABET, which had embodied within it the 'new' Outcomes Based Education model. The holistic development of individuals through adult education, which was discussed in the third chapter, seems to have been overshadowed by emphases on 'deliverables', and on 'outcomes'.

The ambiguity of concepts like 'training' and 'education' in the ABET context have been presented in the chapter. Various critiques of the model have been discussed and these show how the implementation of the OBE model through the intended the Multi-Year Plan, has inherent difficulties. In particular apprehensions about the model were noted; the factors that led to the exclusion of women's concerns has been seen as one of the major weaknesses. The chapter examined how the 'new' programme with a formal structure that emphasises 'efficiency', professional management and pre-set Learning Areas, could also become a factor that leaves target groups, particularly women in rural areas, out of education. It has been argued that the new measures of assessment before and after learning are individualistic as each learner is to be rewarded through certification. This approach assumes that outcomes are automatic by intent; that a transformative learning process will occur because it is so desired by the learner.

It can be suggested that whatever ABET plan is to be put in place, it needs to be strategically relevant to the situation at a given time. Perhaps what is needed is not only representations within structures of decision making, but also to ensure the plan for educating adults aspires to the holistic development of individuals, especially in terms of the social, cultural, political and aesthetic dimensions of their existence (Swartz, 1993).

In the light of the foregoing, there is apprehension that women will continue to be marginalised in these changing educational, economic and political contexts. It has been seen that, in South Africa, the women's movement began as an educative and empowering force. Yet, it has been noted that the 'new' adult basic education and training programme has potential to leave women on the periphery. This is of central importance to the development of a new non-racist, non-sexist South Africa. One might wonder as to the formulation and practice of the roles of ABET, especially in the context of women in one rural area of South Africa.

Thus there emerge certain questions:

How is the purpose of ABET in Moutse perceived?

What are the factors that shaped the development of ABET in Moutse?

What forms of knowledge are required to make ABET relevant for women?

How does the practice of ABET affect issues of gender equality?

How do women from a rural community of Moutse define progress in a community?

To what extent has ABET enabled women in particular to develop critical understanding of their world?

The subsequent chapter describes the methods used in answering these questions. It will state the problem, explain the rationale for selecting a case study and the procedures that were followed in the research process.

Chapter Five

Methodology

The discussions in the previous chapters examined the roles of South African women in terms of their past and current positions. Their contribution to political change through the Women's movement nationally over two decades has been outlined. In addition, an interesting preliminary finding about Moutse women was the persistent political role that they played before and during the liberation struggle. The period when men from the area were taken away through migratory labour system. Women were actively involved in resisting 'homeland' policies yet, very little of this account is recorded in the political literature of the district.

As indicated in the previous chapter, illiteracy in Moutse is high (85%), however other forms of artistic literacy and oral history have been sustained through the cultural expressions in the form of baNdebele paintings. This, an expression of cultural pride and identity was managed by local women who generated private funds for their families while the men were working in the gold mines of the big cities. At a practical level therefore, women sought ways of facing both political and economic pressures with which they were faced. Most of these experiences or women in rural communities have not been articulated in the South African feminist writings. Such a gap was endorsed by Fester (1992) who indicated a weakness in South African feminist studies as a privilege of race and class. Much of the research was limited and not based on primary data, and thus failed to represent the voices from rural experiences (Fester, 1992). All these factors presented a niche in which this research was directed.

Views on the role of adult education in a changing society have been presented in earlier chapters where issues of empowerment, transformation and feminist approaches to adult education were analysed. However, the major issue still remains - whether the 'new' ABET can make any contribution to women's emancipation,

particularly against the historical backgrounds as indicated in the foregoing paragraph. In the light of the dynamic and the important movement towards social change one may ask whether adult education can empower people - and whether the 'new' ABET will make this change possible.

This chapter begins by stating the research issues which are subsumed within questions. It gives the rationale for using a case study and for choosing qualitative methods. The procedures and processes are explained and so are the limitations encountered.

Research Issues and Overarching Questions

The research attempts to explore the connections between who the learners are - the social groups in the changing society of South Africa - how they construct knowledge - and the extent to which this knowledge informs their critical understanding of life. In the light of the main discourse, one might ask:

Has the adult basic education and training programme encouraged women to think beyond their immediate concerns?

Are there possibilities for women to become critically aware of factors that impact on their social, political, cultural and economic welfare as a result of participating in ABET?

In what ways can ABET be made relevant to women if it is intended to improve their lives?

The questions were designed to determine:

How was ABET perceived in Moutse?

What are the factors that shaped the development of ABET in Moutse?

What would make ABET relevant for women?

How does (the practice of) ABET affect issues of gender equality?

How do women from a rural community of Moutse define progress in their communities?

To what extent has ABET enabled women in particular to develop a critical understanding of their world?

Research Approach

A case study was used as it was found to be a suitable method in answering the research questions. Its validity was not in its definition *per se* but because it was found to be suitable and appropriate to this study Bryman (1988). Questions were designed to extract subjective interpersonal answers. The aim was, therefore, to draw meanings from women's own understanding of their participation in ABET classes. In addition, it was intended to provide an investigation of women's potential emancipation - as perceived by a group of African women. The research attempted to provide an insight into the relevance of adult education in the current situation, and to indicate how it is experienced and valued through women's eyes.

The research provided a context for meanings given to action within the context of ABET - policy-making and conclusions regarding its efficacy for emancipation and empowerment.

Because the thesis attempted to develop a holistic account of women's own perceptions about their learning experiences, it focused on observed processes and behaviour. According to Hammersley (1992) studies in human experience show that qualitative methods are more appropriate. The nature of the study seemed to fall into the characteristics of qualitative research adapted from Hammersley's (1992) book *What's Wrong with Ethnography* which argues that such methods:

- Are an analysis of words and images rather than numbers;
- Have a preference for naturally occurring data, observation rather than experiment, unstructured rather than structured interviews;
- Have preference for meanings rather than behaviour – attempting to 'document the world from the point of view of the people studied' (Hammersley, 1992:165);

- Reject natural science as a model; have a preference for inductive, hypothesis-generating research rather than hypothesis testing (Silverman, 2000:8).

Several factors were considered in the selection of the method. The purpose of the research was to communicate meanings or ‘a deeper understanding’ of behaviour in a specific context (Silverman, 2000). Individuals selected in the sample were ‘handpicked and judged to be typical’ to the character of the area. Thus a purposive sample was selected. However, research on human experience is not limited only to its descriptive accounts but - also includes deductive meanings from theory (May, 1993).

In order to achieve an insight into women’s own meanings and understandings of their participation in ABET, the use of qualitative methods, including individual interviews became important. Furthermore, the effects of learning and the impact of the system on learners’ views or their worlds were delineated from their personal descriptions.

Another factor in the choice of methods was the socio-cultural nature of the area where the research was conducted. Masifundisane is a project located in Moutse, a rural district in Mpumalanga Province. The Province is divided into 10 educational regions, each with districts managed by district directors.

Table 5.1 Educational Demarcation in Mpumalanga Province.

Regions:	Districts:
Eestehoek	06
Ermelo	06
Groblersdal	05 *
Hazyview	05
Kwa-Mhlanga	06
Malelane	05
Moretele	05
Nelspruit	06
Standerton	08
Witbank	06
* Moutse District is one of the five districts in the region. Some of the learners came from Weldevrede which in terms of the demarcation is also a sub-district.	

Source: Annexure A: Mpumalanga Education Department, 1997.

Moutse has villages deprived of infrastructure with one major road that connects the district to the nearest town, Groblersdal, 11 kilometers away to the East [Map next page]. Telecommunication is very basic if not limited. Much of the local communication is by word of mouth.

The customary way of communicating en masse is through public gatherings. Village meetings are the source of disseminating information. Those unable to take part receive information through their children, who attend school or local churches. The established forms of communication make up for the inadequate postal infrastructure. Some villages are more than 18 kilometres from the nearest postal service.

The level of illiteracy in Moutse in 1997 was 85% (MCLP 1997 Annual Report). In 1998 the learners from Masifundisane project would have had one year of numeracy lessons and two years of literacy classes, in their mother tongue. This field research required the author to be in the field for two months. However, it was seen that the limited period of two months within which the questionnaires would be completed would have been inadequate in an area with poor postal services. As a tool for gathering data, a postal questionnaire would have been inadequate. It was, therefore, appropriate to use participant observation, focus groups and individual interviews.

It was also important to be in the “natural settings” of the respondents because the research was concerned with women within their community, in other words, in an holistic context. The range of social interactions was considered a worthwhile variable from which deductions could be drawn not because they could provide ‘a whole picture’. The research was conducted with the respondents at their homes (focus group interviews and individual interviews), during their lessons (observations), and by observing the levels of participation while engaged in local events. This form of ‘triangulation’ (Mason in Silverman, 2000:98) is said to enhance the reliability of the





Map 2: Mpumalanga Province



Map 3: The nine Provinces of South Africa

methods particularly because the social reality and behavioural patterns of learners varied in different contexts. For example, when at home, behaviour would be likely to be more relaxed than the activity was in the classroom.

Furthermore, another factor that altered the research design had to do with language and traditional protocol in Moutse. For example, one of the researcher's assumptions was that Moutse people speak mainly one language in addition to isiNdebele. However, it was discovered that there are three languages: isiSwati, sePedi and the Nguni language in which two dialects (isiNdebele and isiZulu) are spoken in the district. The people not only differ in language but have had different geographical origins and varied historical and political experiences. It became important, therefore, to begin by collecting historical information about the area in order to understand the background of the respondents, in terms not only of educational experiences, but also their socio-historical make-up and traditional protocol.

Background reading material and records of the Masifundisane project became useful. The records provided information about the rationale for setting up the project, the political persuasions underpinning the programme (change from liberation politics to development), the types of people who were involved (mainly local by consensus), the processes of consultation that were followed in setting up the project, the forms and media of communication used (local radio and school messages) and the nature of communication in a district with diverse ethnic and language backgrounds.

The Site of the Research

The field research was conducted in two adult education learning centres of a literacy project called Masifundisane Community Learning Project (MCLP) in Moutse Central district, now called Dennilton. Moutse is a rural district with 500, 000 inhabitants in a province of approximately 2, 800, 711 people. It is a district in an agricultural area with a large Olifants river flowing east of the villages bordered by the Loskop dam.

Middleburg, is approximately 150 kilometres away to the South. On the western border of Moutse are bare, barren and dry lands with sandy soil, barely habitable or useful for any agricultural activities [Photograph 8]. Many people were resettled in the dry uninhabitable lands by force during the period of relocating people under the apartheid system (Ngobeni, 1998).

It is an area which, in the 1980s, was fragmented by the former 'homeland' policies¹⁹, consisting of people attached to the three 'homelands' of kwa-Ndebele, ka-Ngwane and Lebowa kgomo. One of the consequences of the 'homeland' system has been the segregation of rural communities characterised by unemployment, poverty and illiteracy. Moutse is one of those. Because there were no industries in the area, most of the men were recruited to provide cheap labour in the mines either as daily commuters or migrant labourers while women stayed at home to keep 'the fires burning'. Over the years, the people of Moutse consistently fought against the oppressive system of apartheid which had caused language and ethnic divisions amongst them.

There are 40 primary schools, and 16 secondary schools in which no provision for adult education was made until 1989. The result of poor allocation of resources is the 85% illiteracy rate continuing generation after generation (MCLP 1997 Annual Report).

The lack of educational facilities for adults has resulted in very limited opportunities for both women and men. It was after 1994, under the new Constitution, wherein the right to education was instituted, the Moutse people showed their determination to acquire education. In such circumstances it became important for this research to

¹⁹ The Bantu Homelands Constitution Act of 1971 gave the South African president the power to divide people of South Africa according to ethnic groups, allocate specific geographical areas and declare it a 'homeland' under the jurisdiction of leaders who were not democratically appointed.

investigate the impact of adult basic education, with a particular focus on the conditions and position of women in this area. The fieldwork processes included interviews with 'key informants', focus group interviews, observations of teaching lessons, individual in-depth interviews all to be discussed in the next section.

Although the aim was to collect information and acquire as much 'thick richness' (Bodgan et al. 1982) in an authentic enquiry, the researcher had to adapt to the circumstances found in the field. The nature of adult education in rural and urban areas has been shaped differently by socio-political events and the differences between rural communities, but importantly the significant input of women in most of the processes.

It was therefore in the interest of the research to discover how women's roles had been recognised and whether they had or had not been enriched by adult education. Thus, going into the research field was an opportunity to understand adult basic education as a very practical process which perhaps contributed to transforming the minds, attitudes and systems in society. Arguments in the third chapter (historical development of ABE) and fourth chapter (the 'new' ABET policy) pointed to the practical emphases and orientations of adult education toward problem solving, not only for individuals but also for communities and for the nation as a whole. Adult education was seen (in chapter two) as a way of bringing members of the community together to raise awareness about historical, economic and cultural developments. As political and social change continued it was important for this thesis to find out how the educational changes impacted upon women: to find out if adult education processes encouraged the type of empowerment and emancipation anticipated by the women. The inclusion of men in the research also enriched the data because men were able to provide different perspectives from those of women on gender in educational development.

Processes and Tools for Collecting Data

In order to place the research within the on-going ABET debates, specific individuals were identified. They became ‘key informants’ as they provided a wealth of background data and current contextual information. The criteria for identifying persons was either their expertise in academic and practical experience, or expert knowledge on the history and development of adult basic education in an African or international context. Other ‘key informants’ were selected on the basis of their experience in research, community development or their expertise in gender studies broadly and specifically in South Africa.

It became apparent from a review of literature that the central issues in the research were *women, development, training, emancipation, education and gender*. Bearing in mind these main issues, the ‘key informants’ were selected from related fields. There were women in development, training, popular education, gender education and training and in the development sectors relevant for African women (see Appendix 1).

Preliminary ‘sounding advice’ was sought from two categories of informants. The first seven informants [K1 – K7]²⁰ comprised a group of four experts in the field of adult basic education, one person in African studies, and two with expertise in community and adult education and in the women’s development field.

The second category [K8 – K10] was made up of local historians from the two villages where some of the learners resided. The representatives of the baNtwane [K10] chief and the Ndebele herdsman [K9] were interviewed on their knowledge of the district and about the roles of women in the area. Founder members [Fm1 – Fm3] of the project provided data on the historical and cultural factors that led to the formation of the literacy project - Masifundisane. The founder members also fitted into the category of historian and as project members.

²⁰ Codes used: **K1 – K10**: Key Informants; **Fm1 – Fm3**: Founder member; **L1 – L8**: Learner; **F1 – F8**: Facilitator; **S1 – S5**: Staff; **G1 and G2**: Members in the Focus Groups (Appendices 1 and 2).

The 'key informants' were important as a sounding board to establish whether the research questions listed above were still relevant. It was also important to determine the 'soundness' and the 'relevance' of the research questions because the changes in the policy development for adult learning were so rapid between the years 1990 and 1995.

It was the intention of the research to see if the subsequent emphases on the purpose of adult education also changed, especially in light of being a new programme (which began in 1995). Indeed progress in this field research ran parallel to the adoption of the 'new' ABET policy and the beginning of its implementation phase in 1998. Thus, the evolutionary nature of the adult education domain and the reality that the project chosen (MCLP) was also in its infancy, informs the format and the information to be discussed in the thesis.

At the beginning of the fieldwork process two meetings were arranged by the (MCLP) project director to meet and introduce the researcher to the staff. The role of the researcher and the information needs were explained at the staff meeting of 4th February 1998 and subsequently on 6th March 1998. The agenda (Appendix 8) prepared by the project director was circulated prior to the researcher's arrival. All the facilitators and two management representatives attended the March 1998 meeting during which the purpose, aim and parameters of the research were discussed. The researcher's student status, although at a different level from that of the respondents, was openly declared.

During this meeting two issues which had not been clearly understood by the staff surfaced. First, the project members wanted to know whether the results of the research would be of immediate use, and second, they expressed their apprehension about the special focus on women learners. From the deliberations at both meetings, it emerged that the staff thought a mutual partnership would develop during the process of the research and that the findings would be used for evaluating the project.

Some of the anxieties raised were:

“What changes will be envisaged after the research?”

“What yardstick shall we use to assess the impact of the research?”

“Why did you choose Masifundisane project?”

The meetings were thus important for the researcher as well as the project staff to understand the purpose of the research. It was crucial to obtain consent from all the staff and clarify their understanding of the researcher's role and the fact that the research process, while linked to the programme, would assume an independent path alongside the daily activities of learning. At those meetings, the staff and facilitators were provided with an opportunity to either accept or reject the proposed research plan and express any apprehensions about the 'additional' member in their group. Other related issues concerned the length of the research and the importance and implications of collecting information about the project from the learners. The facilitators were also assured of their voluntary role in the research although they were expected to introduce the research plan and process to the learners.

Fortunately, the project documents were made available. The historical background appears in most of the funding proposals since 1989 when the project was founded. The statement of its objectives is summarised in the project handout.²¹ A separate one page summary provided the profile of the organisation, its mission statement, key activities, course content and the demographic breakdown of Moutse. The record of the first year of external examinations conducted by the Independent Examinations Board in 1996 and 1998 was provided. In addition, information about the programme cost per learner and the legal status of the organisation and programme plan were also provided. Annual reports since the inception of the project were readily available upon request.

²¹ Aims and objectives: Masifundisane Community Literacy Project is a non-profit community based organisation. Its aim is to address the problems of illiteracy in the Moutse area as well as promote progress with which adults can venture into entrepreneurial activities to improve their economic conditions (See copy of the Handout appended as the last page of the thesis).

Although Masifundisane began as an Advice Centre in 1989 in the subsequent years its activities changed in emphasis. In 1993/94 questions were asked by concerned individuals about the value of teaching adults to read and write (MCLP Annual Reports, 1990 - 1991). The Advice centre decided to introduce communication skills; training in economic literacy; job creation training skills; life skills and education in citizenship and teacher training. Such developments can be seen as resulting from the impact of ‘popular education’ as well as the influences of international donor agencies whose focus ranged from community education to literacy. The nature of the work at Masifundisane thus changed from ‘an advice centre’ on a number of social and political issues like ‘Voter Education’ to a centre specialising in basic literacy.

The course outline during the first years was as follows:

Mainstream Course: which comprises English, Mother Tongue, Numeracy and Mathematics courses.

Self-help Ventures, e.g. income generation projects and small subsistence projects like weaving and gardening.

Civil Society Education, which covers health and democracy education.

According to the project records, there were 794 participants in 1994 who were interested in the programme offered. This number decreased to 355 learners (approximately 88% female and 12% male) in 1998.

Table 5.2 Statistical Profile of Masifundisane Community Literacy Project 1998.

Learners by Levels	Female	Male
Level A Beginners	95	29
Level 1	74	11
Level 2	86	10
Level 3	45	05
Total	300	55
Facilitators	15	13
Staff on Management	05	04

Source: MCLP 1997 Report

It became apparent from the reading the project documents and after the two meetings with the staff that face to face contact with the learners would form the basis of collecting data. The first method adopted, the focus group interviews, preceded the class observations and the in-depth individual interviews.

A focus group has been defined as:

an informal discussion among selected individuals about specific topics relevant to the situation at hand. Such discussions allow a group to 'create a candid, normal conversation that addresses in-depth issues' on a given topic (in Vaughn, et.al, 1996:15).

Vaughn noted that focus group interviews have been popular in the marketing and business areas for years. The methods were originally applied to reach out to large numbers of 'consumers' who could not be included in selected samples for trying out new products. Beyond the 'number issues', focus group interviews were also used to 'discover why people act, think, and feel as they do (Bellenger, Bernhardt, and Goldstucker, 1976). However they have also been applied in the fields of communication, health and education; and became particularly popular as a research method when new educational programmes were implemented. Although the original application of the methods was based on consumer perceptions and interests, Vaughn et al (1996) observed that it was becoming clear that practitioners in education have also found value in the method.

The core elements suggested in the application of focus group interviews are that:

- The group is an informal assembly of target persons whose points of view are requested on a selected topic.
- The group is small, 6 to 12 members, and is relatively homogeneous.
- A trained moderator with prepared questions, probes, sets the stage and induces participants' responses.
- The goal is to elicit the perceptions, feelings, attitudes and ideas of participants about a selected topic.

- Focus groups do not generate quantitative information that can be projected to a larger population (Vaughn, et al, 1996:18).

The focus group interview was considered helpful to introduce the respondents to the research activity, in which many learners in Moutse had not previously been involved. Judging from the type of ethical questions raised by the staff during the introductory meetings 6th March 1998 the learners needed to be gradually introduced to the research process and allowed to establish their understanding of its aims and conditions.

Almost all the elements suggested above could be adapted to the context of the research. First, as an outsider in the traditional remote villages, it is the normal custom for an 'outsider' (not only by origin, but also by purpose) to follow protocol under the authority of the chiefs and be introduced by a local person. Second, the research was conducted in people's homes, at a number of learning centers, and in the villages generally. Direct entry with a specific task like research or any other activity without proper protocol would have been considered disrespectful.

Although many of the Masifundisane learners were already aware of the research activity, the researcher's knowledge of the 'local culture' was limited. Moreover, it was important to find out the initial reactions and receptivity of women to a 'stranger' in and around their villages, wanting to talk about issues that were important to them. Focus group interviews were conducted as a starting point for a stranger to gain entry into the community. As such the interviews were:

generally used when conducting exploratory research. Often the first step in a research study, focus groups interviews are followed by subsequent studies designed to refine and further explain the findings (Vaughn, et.al, 1996:30).

The process was thus used to get acquainted with women and to explore acceptable ways of talking about their lives and about their social system. By so doing, an opportunity to explore fairly complex (and private) problems was pursued through simple methods in which the women decided on the topics and engaged in a

conversation. The researcher would discover individual characteristics and cultural practices from the way women made decisions about where to meet, how they addressed one another in a group and their choices and use of clan names. Also important were the traditional expressions and phrases through which they determined power relations among themselves. Their interactions would give some indications of who they considered to be a leader or a follower, an initiator or a person who has skills of co-ordinating group actions.

It was important for the researcher to create an opportunity for the members of the groups to be acquainted, within limitations, with the group leader. At the same time, it was confirmed that the women had accepted the intervention and were freely prepared to talk about matters pertinent to their lives (Lederman, 1990; Stewart and Shamdassani, 1990).

One of the advantages of setting up focus groups was that the learners from small centres were included and encouraged to express their opinions. Since only two learning centres had more than five women in Level 3, the focus group interviews became a quick method of including other individuals in Level 3 who were in classes with fewer than five members.

One of the procedures applied was a conversation with two focus groups of nine (9) and twelve (12) women. The first group [to be labelled G1] comprised currently registered learners who had advanced up to Level 3. It was assumed that this period of study would have afforded the learners time to acquire basic reading and writing skills; also that they would have had more experience in and about the project Masifundisane, and thus could better reflect on their educational exposure and its importance to their lives. According to the attendance records, G1 members were consistent and had never dropped out of the programme after the first year (1995) of registration. They were also selected on the basis of their close proximity to the learning centres. The second group [to be labelled G2] was made up of elderly mothers who had dropped out of the course a year or two earlier.

Once the focus groups were formed, the spontaneously generated information was used to prepare in-depth questions for selected individuals. The initial experience provided a mutually relaxed atmosphere for both the researcher and the respondents, and affirmed that research allows freedom to express ideas, opinions, perceptions and personal judgement about many inter-connected issues.

The members in the two focus groups were free to use as many languages as they wished. The responses were given in three languages (isiZulu, seTswana and isiNdebele - all easily understood and spoken fluently by the researcher). The first minutes of the meeting were used to share social matters of a general nature. Although the initial discussions were less structured, they had a 'snowball' effect with one idea leading to another in a cordial manner. The groups naturally proceeded to discuss one another's progress in, for example, the knitting and crocheting activities. Eventually the deliberations were focussed on what each of them needed in order to get more material, to find financial resources and market outlets for the finished products. From that point onwards, the researcher could re-focus and direct the questions to get responses on the extent to which their exposure to adult basic education had, or had not, been helpful for their lives.

Focus group interviews were useful in suggesting new ideas that were not originally included in the design of the interview questions. They provided an opportunity to pick up common concepts with which women would associate easily. For example, the concept addressing the status of women was understood to mean 'women's progress' *'ingqubela'*, (G2) and different from 'women's development' *'inguquko'* (See Fm1, L7 responses in the next chapter). The meetings with the focus groups were an opportunity to confirm whether there had been any type of educational research in Moutse apart from the community consultation meetings or market-related research interviews by which company representatives solicited people's opinions about new products.

Although some of the members of the groups were well acquainted with one another, the researcher could not assume that the familiarity would not upset group dynamics. There are situations in which focus groups may fail, an observation noted in Stewart et al (1990) because individuals are inhibited, and would feel better with strangers especially when unusual matters were raised. These focus group interviews were very different from general community gatherings when a number of community matters are discussed. In this study, personal matters of particular concern to individuals were raised, as they each reflected on how adult education had affected their lives. It would have been wrong to have assumed that the discussions were easy issues to handle. In spite of the fact that the women knew each other, they belonged to different centres of learning, so they had never had to respond to issues about women or gender in an educational situation. In practice, they provided a spontaneous and illuminating account of what they thought about educational progress in the 'new' South Africa. The purpose of this research is to focus on holistic meanings given to learning experiences and to find out how learners interpreted their behaviour.

The preliminary findings from the focus group interactions made it possible to make decisions about whom to select for observation as well as in-depth interviews.

As will be seen in the next section, in addition to the focus group interviews, the researcher concentrated on classroom interactions as well as learning process and methods.

The researcher noted in particular how power relations manifested themselves in the lessons, [the role of the teacher vis-à-vis the learners]; the interactions between the learners and the facilitators [activities and actions] the use of gender vocabulary, how roles were exchanged [voluntarily or directed] as well as the content and methods of each lesson and the extent to which classroom interaction encouraged processes that led to critical and thought-provoking learning.

An observation whereby the researcher fully engages in the activities to be observed is known as a *complete participant*.

The researcher employing this role attempts to engage fully in the activities of the group or organisation under investigation (Gold, 1969:36).

The researcher in this study adopted a non-participant observation technique although the intentions and procedures of the research were explained to both staff and learners. It was therefore not a 'cold and detached' stance, but one in which the plan and purpose were understood. In this way it was recognised that:

The researcher can adopt an overt role and make her or his presence and intentions known to the group (May, 1993:117).

The purpose and procedures of this research were well known to all the learners and staff members. The observation technique was not simply chosen because it is commonly used in educational research, but because it would 'sharpen the insights' (May, 1993) gained in the preliminary focus group discussions. Oral and non-verbal interactions among women were recorded to provide additional data drawn from the ways they conducted themselves individually and collectively.

Two groups of learners, one from Umthombo we Mfundo learning centre, the other from O.R. Tambo learning centre, were chosen for observation over sixty hours in total. These two of the eleven learning centres (all but one in a high school) were selected because they each had literacy classes with more than five learners at Level 3. In each of the selected centres were members of G1. Umthombo we Mfundo centre was the first to be established by MCLP and was known for its reputation for establishing the value of literacy in the area. O.R. Tambo centre, unlike other lower primary school centres, is a high school with staff from diverse political backgrounds. The principal, at O.R Tambo also a founder member of MCLP, is not in the same political party as many of the MCLP tutors. Although, at an individual level, each facilitator held their own principles, at 'project' level almost all were instrumental in facilitating the debates on, for example, land issues and thus maintained a radical outlook on education and the social conditions in which the adult population find themselves. All these factors were important in comparing how prior experiences and

the empowering nature of adult education were translated into the learning situation by the different women in the tutorials.

The tutorials were scheduled from 2: 00 p.m., sometimes began at 2:30 p.m. until 4: 00 p.m. with a second session from 5: 00 p.m. to 7: 00 in the evening. The classes alternated between a Numeracy class and a Communicative English tutorial. Although the content of the lessons at Level 3 are primarily numeracy and language, (the defined Learning Areas according to the ABET framework), the class observations provided an opportunity to examine how knowledge was defined. It was possible to observe how the topics for the lessons were decided and the extent to which the learners contributed to the process. In each of the teaching and learning sessions the researcher was seated at the side of the group; separate enough not to draw the attention of the learners but well positioned to see the group interactions. As a non-participant, caution was taken that the presence did not affect the authority of the facilitator. The attendance was recorded daily. In each of the tutorials, the frequency of responses from each participant was noted and tabulated.

The advantage of using observation techniques is that they provide an opportunity to record the behaviour patterns from which learning interactions can be discerned. They also allowed the research process to 'begin with silence', to watch, note and allow people to make their own meaningful comment and not be influenced by the researcher's own viewpoint. The observation allowed an opportunity to enter into the 'educative process' and to construct some meanings from interactive processes and to contrast and compare behaviour patterns of women with those in the focus groups where there were no males.

In other words, class interactions were the:

social scenes from which to observe what goes on within it and how people act and interpret themselves within their social situations (May, 1993:139).

It was a process of ‘reflecting and altering’ the observations. According to May, such a process:

permits the researcher to witness people’s actions in different settings and routinely ask themselves a myriad of questions concerning people’s motivations, beliefs and actions (May, 1993:143).

In this way, a comparison was made of opinions and behaviour patterns of learners’ actions relating to power relations in the classroom. It was meant to determine whether the ‘formal’ setting in the classroom led by a male person would reveal any difference from the ‘informal’ interactions in the focus group setting and outside the classroom.

It had been explained during the introductory meeting on 6th March 1998 that in the Moutse district, general participation in communal matters had been an inclusive one. Women, young adults and men had been active in politics and in matters of social concern. The contrasts between the informality of community education and the structured form of adult education, wherein males seemed to take the leading roles as teachers, were significant variables for the research questions.

Each observation session was recorded with detailed notes divided into four categories: Actions, Activity, Responses and Reactions. The behaviour patterns and frequencies were collated into themes in accordance with the four categories. For example the actions of each learner on each lesson observed, or the vocabulary of the facilitator(s) were added for all the sixty sessions observed. Out of the total patterns of behaviour were noted and classified by their frequency range.

An example of the observation notes is illustrated in Box 1 below.

Box 1. An observation of a Numeracy Lesson at Umthombo Centre 2:30p.m. – 3:32 p.m.				
Actions	Activity	Responses	Reactions	Observer's reactions
The word "Conversions of Units" written on the chalk board	The facilitator tells the learners that today is going to be a revision day and writes on the board and says: 1 km – 1000m 3 km – 3000m	Whispering "siya-divaida" "we are dividing"	The facilitator smiles as he poses the question and waits for reply. There is a long pause; Three learners fiddle around with rulers trying to calculate by themselves;	Why does the male learner choose to sit away from the group? Will the baby be quiet until the end of the lesson?

Notes: At 2:30 p.m. the learners were in class, six women and one man sitting at the back row. The facilitator introduced the lesson by saying that it was a revision lesson on Units of measurement. One more learner arrived at 2:40 p.m. with a baby at her back. Took a chair on the front row and for half an hour she did not open her plastic bag and took a while before she participated in the class activities at 3:10 p.m.

Other dimensions that added value to the observation data were the 'setting, interactions and non-verbal behaviour patterns' (Engelbretson, in Silverman, 2000). For example, the important nuances of language use and body language were noted as the tutorial members came from different language backgrounds. In the informal interactions as well as during the focus groups, the members expressed themselves in local dialects, however the expectations at Level 3 is that teaching and learning sessions were conducted in English. Traditionally in village life 'physical space' among age groups and between gender is respected in a structured interaction like a meeting. The young seldom freely interact with the elderly unless in a social event or home environment and thus, the seating arrangements and the distance of the tutor(s) (generally younger) from the learners were also noted.

In addition to the content of the lessons, the leadership abilities were noted through the 'frequency and distribution' (May, 1993), that is the frequency with which each learner contributed or took an initiative action in the lesson. The use of mother tongue as well as examples of gender vocabulary during the lessons were recorded. In this

way, the distribution of typical behaviours among the learners and the tutors and the likelihood of using typical vocabulary could be monitored. Each action that displayed leadership as well as use of female or male references were noted in tallies [///].

Box 2 Format used to capture the learner participation in lessons at each centre.					
	2:00 – 2:30	2:30 – 3:00	3:00 – 3:30	3:30 – 4:00	
Language changes (F)	////, ///	////, ////, //			20
Gender references (F)	//,	////,			07
Language changes (L)	////, ///	////, ///	//, ////, /	//, ///	30
Gender references (L)	//,	/		///	06

Notes: Every half an hour when the facilitator changed language from English to isiZulu or made an example referring to gender a tally [/] was recorded.

(F) Facilitator

(L) Learner

These variables were considered as evaluative indicators of the content of the lessons, the levels of interaction among the learners, sensitivity and awareness about gender as well as the use of diverse languages in the lessons. All these variables were assessed in relation to the nature of subjects to which learners were introduced, the decisions about what to learn, the roles of learners in these decisions and the determinant factors on how decisions were made. At the end of each teaching session, reports were written up so that the next day's observations would start with a clean slate. At the end of the class observation a selection of eight learners was chosen and included among the individuals who were interviewed.

In addition to the class observations, in-depth individual interviews with twenty two (22) members of the project were conducted. The interviewees consisted of eight learners [L1 –L8] seven women and one man (see Appendix 2) three members of the management committee [Fm1- Fm3] one woman and two men; six facilitators [F1 – F6] four men and two women and five full time staff members [S1 – S5] of whom three were women.

Individual semi-structured interviews differ from structured interviews in that the:

former uses specified questions in which the interviewer can probe beyond the answers in a manner that can elicit more information (May, 1993:149).

The semi-structured interviews were used to guide questions (see Appendix 5). As the answers were given the researcher probed for further clarification and elaboration as the answers were given. Not only were the answers recorded, but the nature of the interview process, the verbal and non-verbal reactions of the respondents could be recorded as they happened.

The flow of the individual interviews with learners began with a general discussion which was guided wherein the main issues were introduced the beginning. These were followed by supplementary and probing questions linked to the respondent's replies. Some questions were asked in the same way and in the same order when definitions or opinions about 'empowerment', 'progress' and 'emancipation' were probed. The members of staff and managers were allowed to answer questions relating to the future vision of the project with specific follow-on questions on matters relevant to gender development plans and the role of women in the project as well as in the community. Since illiteracy among women was an issue of concern to the MCLP project as indicated in the project handout in 1993/94, it was necessary and pertinent to the research to find out what perceptions were held about an emancipatory programme for women.

Among the thirteen women who were interviewed, nine were married, a factor that generally makes it difficult for adult women to register and study because of home responsibilities. Four of the married learners lived with their in-laws and their children in the same household. Their husbands worked outside Moutse and came home either on a weekly basis (one family) or monthly (three families). Their ages ranged between 21 and 47 years. The group of women, thus, formed a 'mirror image' of the migratory labour situation whereby the men in the district spent more time away from home, compounding the difficulties for women to access education.

All the learners agreed to be interviewed individually in their homes. The staff and managers of the programme arranged individual appointments in between their work schedules. In order to establish good rapport and to reduce any hierarchy between the researcher and the respondents a less structured strategy was preferred. For example, the respondents could choose the venue for the interview rather than be interviewed at the offices of the project. Sometimes the interviews were conducted in the evenings, by arrangement so that the research was not perceived to be interfering with the daily routines. It was agreed that the learners could respond in any language of their choice. This choice, although flexible, added the dimension of translation and interpretation of responses which were given in either isiZulu, seTswana or in isiNdebele. Different meanings were given to the same concepts depending on what language the respondent spoke.

For example, various meanings were given to the word 'involvement' from the question:

How are you involved in programmes that address women's issues?

Some interpreted involvement as '*ililungelo*', 'the right to participate', while others responded with a tone that suggested some reservations '*gongwe nka ba thushisa ge go nyakega*' 'I help when necessary'. In order to refine the meaning, the responses were given to a more literate language interpreter for validation.

All the data were recorded on an audiotape and later transcribed for translation when necessary. Any related remarks and comments, which were made during and after the interviews, were recorded. In addition to the chosen methods of collecting data, a few of the community events that happened during the period of the fieldwork became equally important as a source of data. Qualitative methodologies have the advantage of being adaptable to the natural sequences and consequences of events in the environment of fieldwork.

On three different occasions, it was possible to participate and observe the levels and extent of engagement of the learners and staff at events of communal concern outside

the 'formal' learning sessions. These were instances where an education organisation (MCLP) did not consider itself separate from its community, but identified with people's day to day social gatherings. The first occasion was a funeral of a former colleague, a language co-ordinator who had resigned from MCLP and had been appointed to work on the National Literacy Co-operation (NLC) of which MCLP was a member. The NLC was considered by its affiliated members as a national structure which co-ordinated the programmes of its affiliates but mainly solicited funding for the members. As such, the resignation of this colleague from MCLP to join NLC was considered a positive link to national events and directions. Although the member was no longer on the MCLP staff, the extent to which his former colleagues and learners were willing to be part of the plans for his funeral was significant.

Participation and community support was shown in chapter three to be one of the pillars on which non-formal education was founded. Solutions to communal problems had brought the people of Moutse together and on this occasion the MCLP staff displayed willingness to meet the funeral costs and make day to day arrangements. Learners and people from far and near attended the funeral, which was an indication that the community had lost a political veteran. Most important for the research was to observe the processes of coming to decisions about the plans, the extent and nature of women's roles in the decision-making processes and finally to observe how cultural and traditional customs affected the project plans.

The second event was a Learner's Day [25th June 1998] where all the representatives of learners from each centre attended a one-day workshop. It was a session where the programme for the year was reviewed, projections for the future were made and the funding situation was presented to the meeting. The Learner's Day was not the same as an annual meeting open to parents, community members and potential learners, but focused specifically on learners' needs and their progress. The workshop was an opportunity to evaluate the degree to which learners influenced the project plans, how decisions were carried through and how they were followed up (Appendix 7). The researcher observed the deliberations of the workshop on Learner's Day. The

responses of each were recorded in hourly intervals. Each time a learner made a suggestion or raised a point a tally mark [/] was recorded. The total frequency of contributions made either a female or male learner was calculated and compared.

The last and most important event was the provincial workshop organised by the Commission for Gender Equality on gender in Mpumalanga province. It appeared that the staff was not aware of the provincial workshop.²² When asked whether MCLP was intending to participate in the provincial workshop, it emerged that there had been no arrangement to do so. This question (raised by the researcher) generated some interest and enthusiasm and the project decided to send one of the staff members to represent MCLP at the provincial workshop. Upon her return her report on the deliberations was received with enthusiasm among the staff. Interest in gender programmes was enhanced. As a result of this information MCLP organised further plans to coincide with Women's Day on 9th August. In other words, it can be seen that the participation of one member of staff at the gender equality workshop has had developmental effects on the project.

The interaction between the researcher and staff led the researcher to reflect upon certain questions:

- Whether the research process can be used as an empowerment process?
- how can a researcher maintain a distance and still create equitable relations in the process?
- is there value-free research?

The essence of any research process is to create knowledge which can be used as socio-political tool. Any knowledge that is gathered, synthesised and used as a means to an end is, according to Nelson and Wright (1995) an empowering process. It is therefore possible according to these authors that the role of the researcher can have an influence among the respondents to build confidence to seek information, to reflect

²² For the purposes of this research, it was felt that the activity was something MCLP could have known about in time. However it is important to note that the researcher obviously thinks of field research as a "two way process".

on it and apply it for collective good, an empowering process of working from within. In this case study, general information relating to and relevant to gender issues was shared with the project members. For example giving information about provincial gender workshop that the project staff was not aware of, and also creating linkages with financial institutions that could fund MCLP. The researcher passed on the information having decided that it was appropriate to do so. Once the confidence was built with the staff, and commitment shown about the interest in gender issues, it was easy for the staff to decide on how to use the information provided to fulfil their annual plans.

However, there are other opinions that a good researcher should not engage in action with the 'subjects', because research is considered an intellectual activity and not social work (Nelson and Wright, 1995). This is seen as a dilemma because once the researcher assumes an 'distant' position from the project members, a hierarchical dichotomy between the researcher to those being researched is upheld. In other words, a cold professional stance during the field-work period could have been perceived as perpetuating inequality.

In addressing this dilemma, Schrijvers (1993) suggested two alternatives: to adopt either a 'dialogical approach' to research, or 'exchanging roles' in the process. In a 'dialectic approach', the researcher monitors a few dynamics: the effects of interacting with the 'respondents', any indicators of development among the 'subjects'; and maintains awareness of the power of inequalities and lastly, tries to ensure that power relations do not separate the researcher from the respondents. The second option 'exchanging roles' is rarely used but occurs mainly when the priorities of the research are determined by all the participants. To some limited degree the elements of a dialogical interaction prevailed in the MCLP context. The terms of the research were agreed upon, relevant information was exchanged at the appropriate time and the staff were provided with referral material when needed.

It is worth mentioning that at the time of the research, only two of the eight ABET Learning Areas had been introduced into the 'curriculum': Literacy – language and communication including reading and writing skills and mathematical literacy, generally known as numeracy. As a result, the findings of the research on content were confined to lessons on English and Numeracy. Some of the wider aspects of the adult education curriculum, unless initiated by the facilitators were not fully taught.

According to the ABET Directorate Multi-Year Plan, 1998 was a period when teachers were to be trained on the outcomes based education (OBE) principles. Many non-government organisations (NGOs), including the site of the research, were to be introduced to the Cascade Model - a training plan in which adult education trainers in each province were to embark on a course on the OBE model and the principles of teaching adults. Once trained, they would be expected to train other facilitators in the districts and at local levels, hence a 'cascade' plan. Because of the developmental nature of the policy, the research was limited to 'what ought to be' or 'the potential displayed' by the project and was not an evaluative research project.

The original intentions of the research, to collect data exclusively from women changed. When the research plan and purpose was introduced to the staff, caution was expressed that an exclusive focus on women would be perceived divisive by the project members (see Appendix 8). Throughout the development of the project, there had never been an event in which women were consulted separately from men and such an approach could have been misinterpreted as divisive. An advantage of using qualitative methods is that they are flexible and adaptable to the context of the research (Hammersley, 1992). Being conscious of the academic position and academic interests, it was thought appropriate to practice participatory decision-making, and not impose a pre-conceived personal plan on the project.

This adaptability of plans relates to transformative research approaches which can be adopted if 'relatively powerless people share in defining power, they share in helping co-determine the course or the outcome of the research' (Schrjivers, 1993:34). Such

approaches support feminist methodologies whereby knowledge is gained not only from the 'knowledgeable' but is an inclusive process based on conscious partiality, in which greater focus would have been mainly on women's opinions (the learners primarily). In this case 'other members' that is, men were also considered. The concept of "conscious partiality" supports a dialogue *with* participants rather than *on* them. In this way, the flexible nature of qualitative methods allowed an opportunity to innovate an all-inclusive approach to the study and include men in the sample of respondents. Although Silverman (2000) recognises the 'flexibility' of qualitative approaches, he stresses the need to be structured in the processes of making adaptations. This was dealt with by asking men similar questions and the findings not only enriched the research, but also brought new and interesting perspectives to the study.

Data from the interviews with the informants, individual learners and staff was recorded in the language of the respondents on an audiotape. During the translation of interviews of the learners, the language used by the interviewees was not altered or modified as it was seen to reflect their proficiency. The researcher kept as closely as possible to the original vocabulary used, behaviours, and reactions. This was captured to reflect the language levels of most of the learners, their gestures, jokes and many other reactions and comments were noted and recorded. Where translation was necessary, an audit of the interview was conducted with the concerned respondent to verify the meaning of words, poetic and proverbial expressions and terminology. One audio-visual example of a Numeracy lesson recorded a typical mathematics teaching style. Although tape recorders and other writing materials were used, the notes taken by the researcher became the essential instrument. Therefore, the data relies heavily on the researcher's notes and insights and the respondents' contributions.

Reflections upon the Research Methods

A number of factors to be reflected upon in the fieldwork relate to the approach chosen – the qualitative approach and the ‘triangulation’ of procedures for collecting data: focus group interviews, interviews and observations, and the issues of language.

Although as already discussed, Vaughn et al (1996) is of the opinion that focus group interviews are used to elicit greater and more in-depth understanding, beliefs, attitudes and experiences among group members, in this study there was a “change in mid-stream” as far as the procedures and processes of collecting data were concerned. The use of focus group interviews in Moutse was used in the search for preliminary data not for in-depth enquiry. They were used to create an easy atmosphere among the prospective respondents, to improve on the research questions and determine if there were any questions that could be added to enrich the individual interviews.

The compatibility of focus group interviews with qualitative methods is, according to Vaughn et al (1996), based on these four factors:

- its ability to offer an opportunity for direct contact with the subjects;
- its interactive nature, with mutual support and openness and
- its compatibility with qualitative paradigm of the study as well as
- its variety and versatility for both quantitative and qualitative research.

In reflecting upon the research process, there are research implications worth discussing, especially the first two points above. In this research, ‘direct contact with the subjects’ who were not familiar with research studies was challenging in a number of ways. First, the researcher’s educational status in a community in which high educational standards are rare, influenced and sharpened the ‘entry’ and standards of professionalism in the process of interacting with all the respondents. University education is ‘as remote a facility’ as the geographical location of any of the distance universities to the community, none of which are within the province. Therefore ‘direct contact’ with respondents, none of whom had any university qualification could have been perceived as either a repelling force or a suspect situation. Some of

the questions about 'the utility of the research findings' raised during the introductory sessions indicated the initial reservations that the staff had about the research process. Thus, 'direct contact' if not well handled could have had a negative impact on the 'respondents' about the purpose and process of selecting interviewees.

Secondly, direct contact tended in practice to be 'indirect', as the visits to the chiefs were mediated by a local person, part of the protocol in the villages. For example, the meeting with the historians at Uitspanning and the Ndebele herdsman (who would not address the researcher directly) would not have been accepted or formalised without the company of a local person regardless of the researcher's fluency in the local dialects. The protocol with 'royalty' or with the 'herdsman' as well as when meeting the representatives of chiefs, requires that any unofficial person be accompanied by a 'local' person.

In support of Vaughn's et al (1996) opinion, direct contact with focus groups can yield more accurate information about what participants actually think than other methods. This is a debatable opinion because in rural communities like Moutse the researcher's 'direct contact' as someone 'unknown' in a small area, also asking questions, was a rare occurrence. Because it was unusual, possibilities of getting inaccurate information, regardless of the understanding established with the projects, were high. If, according to the research design, one had insisted as an 'outsider' on 'direct contact' without engaging a local person, or including men in the sample, this would have also been perceived disrespectful as an 'outsider'. In addition, once the contact was established, it took a while for respondents to say immediately exactly what they thought, even if the ice was easily broken among group members.

In addition, Vaughn et al (1996) assumes that the medium of communication in focus groups is the same and can thus facilitate understanding of meanings and behaviours. However, it was found that communication in traditional communities like Moutse was complicated by the proverbial expressions used in day to day conversations that an outside researcher, unfamiliar with the 'local' and clan expressions may not fully

understand. The silences among women during the Learner's Day workshop, or the omission of important information among the baNtwane chiefs could have easily have been inaccurately interpreted. The use of a combination of methods thus became important to counteract these deficiencies.

Interaction in the focus groups had negative as well as positive aspects. In order to address the validity of the multiple views expressed above, it was necessary to complement the process with in-depth individual interviews. Some of the perspectives expressed in group discussions could thus be followed up. Most importantly the issue of women's emancipation was discussed at length in the individual interviews. The individual opinions, attitudes, beliefs and experiences of each learner were expressed openly and with ease. Each of the responses was given forthrightly.

Another dimension to data collection in a rural area like Moutse related to the language issue, first as a medium of communicating with respondents and second, its varied applications during both the numeracy and communication lessons that were observed. Learners from Moutse used three languages among which are dialects which are used interchangeably in speech. Although there was a level of tolerance among the various learners at different centres, it became obvious during the individual interviews with both staff and learners that the 'political differences and scars' from past are being handled sensitively. Whenever the individual interviews were conducted with the Ndebele herdsman, extra care was necessary in the use of clan names, choice of words and references to past conflicts. For example, the names of chiefs had to be mentioned in order of the seniority of their clans. In addition, the conflict between the local youth in 1976 and 1985 and the village people also reminded the respondents of events they were reluctant to speak about, especially in the current period when South Africa is working on a culture of reconciliation. In Moutse the people are trying to rebuild a district that was divided by the former policies of separate development. Issues of educational resources for adults and access of women to education are still matters of conflict.

One of the ways by which they are trying to resolve past frictions is by means of community events which call upon collective involvement. For example, health programmes for young adults and farm workers who were concerned about AIDS were attended by community members across many political, sex and age divides. Concern about the treatment of farm workers in the neighbouring farms seemed to overcome these differences.

An added dimension to the research process was the validity of the data collected, the meanings women attached to 'empowerment' and 'emancipation', varied meanings which resulted from historical differences and how each of the interviewees interpreted their past and current participation in adult education programmes and activities. Ideas were conceived and interpreted differently depending on the background tradition of the respondents.

Summary

The chapter has provided the rationale for the choice qualitative methods. Because the research was not only about the perceived notions about ABET, but also about the behaviour patterns and the meanings that the learners attach to their actions qualitative methods were seen as most appropriate. As the aim was to gather first hand impressions and get the respondents to be at ease with the research process focus group interview methods were chosen. In order to enhance the reliability of the methods, classes were observed and semi-structured individual interviews were included for collecting the data.

Other factors of importance to the research were considered. These were the socio-political events in the area as they informed the adaptations and the flexibility necessary at the point of field contact. Language, traditional protocol and gender altered the original research plan in a manner invaluable and appropriate in qualitative research.

The research produced a wealth of data which gave a fascinating insight into the interface between ABE and the needs or perceptions of learners in the Moutse community. The differences between policy and practice began to emerge; it became clear that, indeed, policy is a statement of intent and not an implementation tool. Therefore, the findings about the perceived role of ABET, as will be discussed in the next chapter, confirmed that the aims of adult basic education remain contradictory and political. With the beginning of Outcomes Based Education, the perceived nature of adult basic education has changed from a programme broadly encompassing empowerment as an aim, to a form in which skills and specific kind of knowledge is encouraged. It has been argued that it is a change that alters the value of education into a rationale of technical emphases which excludes the contextual, traditional and cultural aspects of adult basic education.

The data, as will be discussed, also presented gaps in the discourse about the relevance of critical theory in feminism and adult basic education. These findings will become the central points of discussion in the next chapter and in the subsequent chapter (seven) which reflects upon these findings in terms of the theoretical and substantive foci on women in particular. The issues of redress and equity in education remain equivocal as will be argued in the next three chapters.

Chapter Six

The Research Findings

Earlier chapters have alerted us to the modern agenda of policy making and state building that owes more to individualism than community, competition rather than partnership and differentiation rather than equity. ABET and social change, especially in women's lives are foremost in this thesis. The central importance of adult education and life long learning for the development of a nation committed to community partnership, equity and indeed social justice through transformation, became a key concern.

The main aim of this thesis through a case study approach is to develop an understanding of how a group of women in a rural area of South Africa come to see their involvement in ABET programmes. Are these programmes pre-limited and contextualised within the modern agenda of policy making? Are they seen as part of the national commitment to partnership, equity, social justice? How do these women related to each other through the programmes? Can this participation offer us insights into ABET in South Africa today?

That concern is manifested in this thesis through a critical analysis of practice in the field of adult education and training, through research to answer the following questions:

How is the purpose of ABET in Moutse perceived?

What are the factors that shaped the development of ABET in Moutse?

What forms of knowledge are required to make ABET relevant for women?

How does the practice of ABET affect issues of gender equality?

How do women from a rural community define progress in a community?

To what extent has ABET enabled women in particular to develop critical understandings of their world?

A detailed narrative has been constructed on the basis of these questions. It is the purpose of this narrative to analyse the findings and then discuss the extent to which there is congruence between the intended goals in ABET policy and its transformative impact on women. The aim of the fieldwork was to understand education as a very practical process that could be oriented toward problem solving, not only at an individual but also at a communal and national level. To achieve this, attention was focussed on a group of African adult learners.

The research produced a wealth of data which gave a fascinating insight into the nature of ABE and the various factors that determine its purpose, form and operation in the Moutse community. From this, key findings which will become central to this chapter will be discussed next.

The key findings suggest that perceptions about the aims of education and in particular adult basic education in Moutse are different among policy makers and implementers. These perceptions have been shaped and continue to be influenced by first, the pressing socio-political and economic imperatives of the country, and second by the historical events.

Historical description of Moutse

The historians, spoke specifically about the origin of the people and how recent conflicts over land have come to be one of the major issues that raised the consciousness of the people in many ways. The conflicts over land ownership highlight the need for people to be able to read in order to understand their legal rights. A brief account of the historical background to these conflicts in Moutse is necessary to illustrate how the need for literacy began.

Moutse²³ as it was originally known, is occupied by the Ndebele, the baPedi and the Zulu speaking people. According to the Ndebele historian and poet, Mahlangu, the original Ndebele people are part of the modern generation of the larger population of the Ndebeles who were led in 1831 by Mzilikazi who finally settled in Zimbabwe.

The first generation that settled in Moutse were led by the Ndebele king in 1831, originally from Natal. He settled in the area which was known as Kocoli where Loskop dam was later built. Years later people moved to Somgadla next to Groblersdal town next to Uqaba (Bevulsvlei) river (K9).

Mahlangu said that before Mzilikazi, many leaders like Chief Somdei, Chief Sibogo and Chief Mabogo had reigned through hard times of war. Mahlangu spoke lengthily and with pride of one renowned war veteran, Chief Mabogo, who defeated the Afrikaners in 1864. The latter, well respected for his unwavering determination because according to Mahlangu, he never gave the Afrikaners any opportunity to overpower the Ndebele people until his death. Mahlangu's opinion was that the current Ndebeles are the offspring of nations that were forced to move and to belong, in the 1980s, to the former KwaNdebele government which was associated with the 'homeland' systems.

Another historian, Ncgobo who actually still lives in Elandsdooring, in Dennilton, mentioned that they are offsprings of the first Zulu people in Moutse:

Probably more than 100 years ago there were no whites in this area. We lived on natural herbs and vegetation which when the area was exhausted we moved (like nomads) to conquer other places. We would kill and capture livestock (to settle there). Forced removal began in 1978 when we were moved to barren and infertile lands. People were relocated to places without food, our lands were taken by the Boers (Afrikaners) (K8).

²³ For purposes of clarity in this thesis the Moutse district is divided into three areas in the West: **(A)** Weldevrede for Ndebeles, central: **(B)** Dennilton with mixed languages and in the East: **(C)** baNtwane, who speak sePedi (the latter area does not show on the original map of Moutse District) .

He continued to relate that there were no schools or churches until Madlala, a qualified teacher, arrived from Marapjane. Madlala organised an education committee which set up the first school with 16 students, who attended classes under the trees as there were no buildings at that time.

Ncgobo said that in the late 1940s a Dutch Reformed church minister, Jacobson arrived. He tried to influence the committee to use the church buildings on condition that they registered the school with the church. The committee refused the offer and instead registered with the government department of the time. Ncgobo went on to express their scepticism about the power of the church:

You see all these recent diseases, Mahlangu, as you see them on the increase, it is because we have moved away from our traditional practices, rushing for modern ways. You see this new religion is the last that will break our nation (K8).

Although he indicated that some of his village men in Moutse succeeded in escaping the influence of religious institutions, his scepticism was an expression of an attitude held generally about the role of churches in the district. In fact, as one travels through, hardly any church structures are visible at short distances. Up to present, the people of Moutse generally hold strongly to their cultural practices and customs. Many of the people still follow indigenous practices and keep to African rather than Christian beliefs. In winter time, classes were suspended because either the parents or their children were involved in initiation ceremonies. This research was also suspended for a week in June in recognition of the initiation events.

The historical movement of the second group, the baPedi people, was related by the spokesman of the baNtwane Chiefs at '*moshate*' - 'the royal kraal':

The baPedi, to the east of the district, were once under the rule of the Lebowa self governing 'homeland'. They are known for their bravery in the Afrikaner wars in the north. Very often they fought alongside the chiefs of Sekhukhune and defeated the 'Boers' (K10).

The chief's spokesman mentioned in passing that in difficult moments of war, they sought strategic wisdom from women, a practice they revered in the past and have recently resorted to when necessary.

This brief overview addresses to the fact that the people of Moutse, notwithstanding their multi-lingual composition have expressed a sense of belonging and valued their land in this area. This sense of cultural identity was strengthened by their rejection of an attempt by one of the churches to manage the school. Having set up the school themselves within their own limited resources, they were 'suspicious' of any external influences. Having attempted for years to act as 'one people' their solidarity was badly affected by the divisive and racist policies of the past government.

The setting up of the 'homelands' by the National Party caused ethnic divisions between the Ndebele and the other Moutse people. Prior to the separate development policies, land had been misappropriated from the rightful owners when the Afrikaners invaded Moutse.

We were chased away by the 'Boers'. We had bought plots there at Mbokodweni, which was near town, and then Pieterse appeared (K8).

According to another historian, Ngobeni, who was most eager to discuss these issues, after the Afrikaners had taken land from the rightful owners, they lured the landless Ndebeles to work on farms for bags of wheat while orchestrating conflict between them and the land owners in Dennilton. Ngobeni remembers how difficult those years were:

This place has always been a troubled place. Its (conflict) beginning started when Mr Pieterse arrived here in December 1939. He used to go around with truck loads full of sand, pumpkin, corn, selling and inviting people to come and work in his farms. He was giving us wrong information, although some people (other Afrikaners) bought some land (K8).

The trouble referred to above was twofold. The first, was the arrival of Afrikaners who ‘twisted their hands’ and bought land through foul means and wrong information. The second source of conflict was the divisive and abusive system that Pieterse started up among the local people. They began to identify themselves ethnically and served their ‘masters’ as cheap labour on the farms.

However, a few of the families from the central section of the district fought to retain their ‘plots’. Others, like one founder member, recalled burning issues around which the people were mobilised, including the scarcity of water for agricultural activities and health concerns.

My father also owned a ‘plot’. I am a plot owner, I used to attend those meetings. The bone of contention was to be able to farm and produce, but the main problem was water (Fm1).

Q: Why was water a problem?

The concern of the ‘plot’ owners was how the canal would be constructed so that it does not cut across our ‘plots’. So we talked about development along these lines, and when conflict arose, Themba [the project director] said we must continue to be involved (Fm1).

The respondent was relating incidents from the period during which people rallied support around pressing issues like water, land and health. A new concept, ‘the people’s education’, was popularly used among non-government organisations countrywide, as well as in Moutse. Information was suddenly freely available to ordinary people. They began to talk about and understand the sources of conflict among themselves and with the farmers. Some of the landowners in the central area of Moutse (Dennilton) discovered that they had lived for years on properties which they would not be able to claim because they (Ngobeni and Ngcobo) and many other landowners were ill advised to trust the magistrate’s office in Pretoria with their ownership certificates. During the ‘homeland’ era the South African Development Trust was constituted to manage land belonging to Africans. Ngobeni and Ngcobo said that many other local people thought and accepted that it was customary for ‘plot owners’ to keep their land documents in a central office in Pretoria. Some of

the reasons put forward by Pieterse were: safety, confidentiality and also because, as the historian said, 'Many of the owners could not read' (Ngobeni, 1998).

When a number of land owners began to be suspicious of the reasons given above, they started to raise questions about ownership. Their families were concerned that they would lose out and not inherit what rightfully belonged to them should their parents die. Other owners (Fm1, K8, Fm3) wanted to subdivide their lands but they could not show proof of ownership. In this process many families, and especially women, got to know how powerless and disadvantaged they were. The only form of ownership for women depended on their relationship to men (Small, 1994). The land tenure was more favourable for married couples, but single and divorced women were threatened with re-possession.

The increased consciousness about power relations made it obvious that there was a need to understand the law and its implications. Basic knowledge about the individual's legal rights became imperative and the relevance of literacy to legal rights could not have been clearer. At the same time basic education could only be useful to the extent to which adults felt they would be fulfilled if such knowledge were acquired. This would be knowledge which they could use to demand legal rights to land that had been misappropriated from them as well as knowledge about agriculture to make the land productive and valuable.

All these circumstances motivated adults to wish to be literate. Civic education was related to an immediate goal with visible and meaningful consequences. The political situation in South Africa and in Moutse in particular was a force driving people to seek specific 'really useful knowledge', information for political rights as well as solutions to their problems. In the process they were conscientised and developed positive and radical attitudes which served as the driving force in the political struggle. According to one of the founder members change was possible if they compared themselves to other countries.

He said that:

As I've said before, maybe in this community we succeeded by showing them (the locals) how in other countries e.g. Zimbabwe, both men and women fought for land which to date is still a thorny issue. Women are currently in the economy. People from Swaziland sell knitted articles, you find few men, but you can see that they can survive by producing from their own lands. Therefore, through a bit of education people will know what land rights mean (Fm3).

It is widely known in Moutse that once the people discovered the politics of land and land ownership, the 'plot' owners fought their case over land through the Supreme Court in Bloemfontein in 1986 and regained their ownership documents. This achievement was one of the major achievements of 'people's education' in Moutse although land distribution continues to be a contested area in many parts of the country as well as in the province of Mpumalanga. The memory of the land issues and struggles from 1930 to 1986 attests to the significance attached to knowledge and literacy in helping people to understand and take control of their lives.

Testimony to the relevance of appropriate and empowering knowledge can be witnessed from the on-going land claim for the 3.2 million hectares of land in the province. It was reported in the *Mail and Guardian (SA)* on 15th February 2000 that:

Farmers in Mpumalanga are banding together to fight land claims as a collective following studies that more than 41% of the province's commercial agricultural land is under claim... It is not only the ownership which is being addressed through land claims but equally imperative is the need for useful adult education (Samayende, 2000:3).

In addition to ownership and re-distribution of land, the article expressed the importance of adult education in that:

Farmers are also pushing to be educated about technical land claims process, their legal rights and have suggested forming a parliamentary lobby group to make input on future debates...(Samayende, 2000:3).

The difference between this proposed lobby and the types of land campaigns in the 1980s is that democratic processes are now available for individuals or associations to move the agenda forward. In addition, the new South African Constitution does not discriminate against women as far as land tenure and ownership is concerned.

The historical background outlined above explains the factors that motivated people to stand firmly for their rights. One of those rights was education. There was a shared understanding among stakeholders that literacy is an imperative if redress is to be meaningful. The staff and learners in MCLP identified the advancement of a political agenda as one of the purposes in which they had been involved. Through the literacy programme, they were engaging in a continuing process of liberation and development.

Perceptions of Adult Basic Education: Social and Economic Liberation.

It would appear that adult and community education in the district of Moutse evolved as a consequence of the 'liberation first and education later' campaign in which large numbers of people in the area were involved, fully determined to create a new society. The success of the political struggle out of which full democracy was achieved set the framework for a new agenda, for social and economic development. The latter is linked with, and seen in the 'new' education plans as related to an improved literacy rate. One of the pressing concerns among the Moutse people is the 85% illiteracy rate. Many of those who joined the literacy project saw its benefits from a wider perspective, with comments such as:

I joined and initiated MCLP to advance the political struggle from liberation politics to development (S1).

It was my interest in community work because we wanted to improve the standard of our community (S3).

After votes my people were suffering, many of them were women. I volunteered in 1994 and I was working at Umthombo in 1995 (S4).

Three issues emerge from these opinions: liberation, development and improvement. There is a sense in which all the interviewees realised that a progressive and

unfolding process of change was occurring. People were liberated by political change, but liberation has not promoted the educational, social and economic development of people, as can be seen from the above comments. In their opinions something else is necessary to improve the living conditions and they have identified literacy as one of the tools for meaningful liberation. This poses the question: why has educational development been so slow if there was so strong a desire for it in Moutse?

If one considers the educational policies of the state in the mid-eighties, when education was provided on a racial basis, it is evident that these were ill-conceived. As discussed in chapter three, adult education was planned on divisive and ethnic grounds as in the 'homeland' policies of separate development. For example, the people of Moutse were divided and forced to belong to the three different education systems, Lebowa, KwaNdebele and the Central government. These divisions caused apprehension and suspicion among community members, to the extent that the first adult education centres that were opened and managed by the state were all branded as 'homeland structures' which did not have community credibility.

Parallel to the state programmes were the adult and community based organisations (CBOs) which also initiated adult education programmes (see Table 4.2). These were considered more legitimate from a historical point of view, cementing the people around the political liberation agenda whereas the state centres offered only formal subjects for young adults.

No provision was made for farm workers in the various educational policies. Consequently, many children and adults who lived on farms missed out on education. For some, the priority was survival through cheap farm labour, while others devoted their time to subsistence farming and care of livestock rather than education.

The adult education centres under government control were well resourced with infrastructure and salaried teachers while the opposite prevailed in the non-government sector. The state centres were primarily meant to absorb the students finishing high school and provided 'formal' programmes. In addition, some provision was made for illiterate adults. The latter were, however, captured in larger numbers by the non-government organisations because here the adults did not have to pay any fees. In an area of unemployment and poverty like Moutse, it was no wonder that many people opted for the NGO/CBO programmes in the early eighties.

Nonetheless, it has been found that although the provision for adult education was varied, practitioners in both state and non-government projects shared a vision for a transformed nation. The practitioners from the Masifundisane project in Moutse, for example, held specific views about the goals of adult basic education in development terms. A typical example given by the project director was that:

... development is perceived in its broad term. If you go to specifics within resource development, literacy plays a part in encouraging that. People are developed in terms of education (S1).

One of the founder members, a local head of a school and a community representative, said that he was enthusiastic when invited to be a member of the Board of Trustees. Knowing that there is high illiteracy in Moutse, he agreed to serve on the committee and these were his observations:

(The realisation) that most rural communities are illiterate, and the only way to have access to what's happening around the world today is by way of education. If people are deprived of education, that is a form of ... a form of oppression and especially on the side of women (Fm2).

He further said the key to development is breaking the barriers between education and the local farming activities:

We are shifting our vision to expand Moutse so that we can engage the farmers in the district. We want them to realise that their employees are not literate and that they can be taught whilst working on the farms, and most of the people who work on those farms are women (Fm2).

Indeed, the two members seem to share common understanding that if their community has to face a new period of reconstruction and development, they are still constrained by illiteracy. With such a pressing and pertinent problem, they both agreed that they needed to attack the problem from a number of angles. They thus found it fitting to forge links with state schools in the district.

One of the founder members (Fm3), a principal at O.R. Tambo, set an example by agreeing to open the school in the afternoon for adult education.

My (reason for) joining the Board of Trustees is that I initiated the introduction of Adult Education when the school (O.R. Tambo) started in 1993. In 1994 I introduced the adult education with the help of some members of the community. [*He was referring to S1 and S2, in their capacity as political activists and trainers in voter education*]. We started with four volunteers who taught for three months. After the Department of Education came to monitor they decided to pay those unqualified teachers for a period of twelve months. We started going out and looking for sponsors, I was asked by the learners to be part of that (Fm3).

An interesting and natural convergence of energies occurred in the course of time. A number of participants got involved in a manner that did not require any marketing or recruitment. In the end volunteers, the Department of Education, learners and community representatives worked together on a progressive project. This informal initiative was extended with an application to the district education officials who positively endorsed the course of action. More primary schools were made available for adult basic education; teaching material was shared, and this forged many links whilst mending the negative prejudices that the community had about state schools. One is reminded of the joke shared when MCLP staff said ‘We will survive like parasites – using their chalk freely, until the national department supplies us with chalk.’

This collaborative effort healed the scars caused by the divisive 'homeland' policy through a spirit of partnership and reconciliation as each met the other half way.

Indeed, people were changing paradigms as expressed by one of the respondents:

The new shift is taking place. As we grow we want people to understand that educators, farmers and local governments can work together. Adult education should not be confined only to schools. We will shift into agriculture as it is happening in Zimbabwe. Expand again in the Department of Environment wherein most women will be engaged (Fm3).

It can be concluded that staff in the programme perceived the adult education agenda as a continuation of the liberation struggle, a struggle whose form would now change people's goals so that they would consider programmes in which they could be economically productive and indeed improve their lives. There existed a compelling drive among people who qualified to move from political activism into an agenda on development. Political emancipation had been achieved and the focus had shifted from the politics of division in which the apartheid system separated people according to their languages, history and ethnicity.

The time had arrived for reconstruction in which literacy was considered one of the tools (S3, S4 and Fm3 above). At the same time education was considered a site for social agenda or an arena for economic transformation. The ethnic and language divisions that resulted from the 'homeland' system were slowly being diffused as people were focusing on a common agenda to improve socio-economic and living conditions in the area.

It was found from the G1 and G2 members of the focus groups, that the learners had known about and participated at the Masakhane Advice Centre when voter education was conducted prior to the 1994 elections. Subsequent to the elections, many members from the area received written notices about a new programme proposed for adult literacy. The need was affirmed. They displayed real understanding of the

value of literacy when they reached a consensus about the name for this new project. The people decided at a local meeting that *Masifundisane* “let us teach one another” Community Literacy Project (MCLP) would be appropriate.

The name of the project came out with people who were first at the meeting. Many of them happened to have been there when names of areas were divided, for example the baNtwane and places like Kwarilaagte...(Fm3).

The founder member said that perhaps the meeting found ‘Masifundisane’ to be a compelling name for people who had qualified from one form of political emancipation and were preparing for another – literacy emancipation. Teaching one another as a collective activity was an all encompassing concept which captured the interest of many people. There were 1090 people interested and willing to support the project when it was first announced, but only 794 adults were fully registered during the first intake toward the end of 1994.

All members of the two focus groups said that they were among the first to register because they were keen to learn to read and write. Prior to that they had participated in the elections although they could neither read nor write. All the learners in G1 agreed that they recognised the importance of literacy for the first time during the elections, and thus were highly motivated. Although others had acquired primary education earlier in their school days, they had forgotten what they had learnt in the past and thought that literacy in the new South Africa would be important. These were typical expressions from some of the registered members:

I started at Level 2 in 1995 [*among those who registered at the end of the year*]. I wanted to learn numbers because each time I went shopping I did not understand prices (L1).

I started in 1995 at Level 2 because I quit school when I was young at standard 5. Now with changes in the country there is a new programme for adults to learn (L2).

Whilst the records showed that a high number of interested adults registered when the project started, only 355 were on record in 1998 (see Table 5.2). It would appear that the level of motivation to stay on the programme differed with age. Older people seemed to want to see the immediate applicability of any knowledge they acquired. The actual age range was not asked directly in the focus group discussions. This is because it is taboo to ask the age of an adult in traditional communities like Moutse. It was possible however to find data on age distribution from the project records in which the identity numbers of each registered learner were recorded. Among them were learners who had registered in 1994 but dropped out of the programme after a year. It was found from the annual reports that many of those who had dropped out of the course did not find immediate application for what they learnt. This lack of interest was confirmed in the focus group interviews (G2) where seven of the members expressed discouragement about continuing the programme because they had hoped that Masifundisane would link them up with financial resources so that they could continue with the projects they had started before joining the literacy programme. As soon as they found that their immediate needs were not addressed, they dropped out of the classes.

As the number of learners decreased each year, the staff tabled the problem for discussion. The records show that learners were interviewed during the Learner's Day and during the Annual Review meetings to find out what their problems were. A common concern recorded as coming from the elderly members in the annual review reports was the question

Of what use would the certificate be if we were about to die?

It was established by the staff that age was a discouraging factor. Some elderly members who had expressed initial interest in the programme were not keen to stay the four years to go through all the standard levels as expected, but they kept contact and were associated with the project in other ways. Those of a younger age were determined to stay on to acquire both the skills of reading and writing and gain new knowledge with which they could be of value in their areas. Furthermore, there were two learners, who had acquired the external certificate Communications, both

attending the classes (although infrequently) but they did not know how else to use their certificates. There are no facilities in Moutse for learners to advance to further education.

Lack of educational facilities is also a historical consequence of uneven allocation of financial resources in this ‘former homeland’. Initiatives in education were influenced and progressed unevenly under separate socio-political systems. Under these systems, education either advanced or was delayed. The ‘separate development’ policy retarded progress in an already disadvantaged rural community, particularly in the villages that were placed under the control of Tribal Authorities, such as Weldevrede.

It was found, for example, when comparing the different areas of Moutse, that in Weldevrede (the West area), most of the schools start at Grade 5, with no provision for pre-school education. Whereas the greater part of Moutse has schools from Grade 1 to Grade 10.

Although there were fewer schools in proportion to the number of learners, the pupil-teacher ratio was higher in Weldevrede compared to the greater Moutse district.

Weldevrede:	42 schools	649 teachers	27, 779 students.
Moutse :	56 schools	2, 655 teachers	38, 589 students.

Source: Education Foundation EMIS 1998/04/21

Although Moutse schools cater for all grades, more than 50% (or 24) out of 42 schools in Weldevrede are mainly lower primary schools. There was also no provision for pre-schools and adult basic education. According to the statistical data from the Mpumalanga Education Department’s 1998 Survey, only 6,870 of the 38,589 students were at secondary schools. A very limited number can therefore complete the final grade. Many of the pupils rarely advance beyond high school

because parents cannot afford money for books or they live too far from the high schools. Some of them grow up to be adults with low educational achievements.

Local traditional leadership has impacted on how 'formal' education, pre-school education as well as adult education has progressed. The director of MCLP spoke about the delaying tactics that affected adult basic education in one of the villages:

We were in conflict with the local chiefs because although we raised the money to set up the centre, they wanted to control the funds and the appointment of tutors. The tutors that they appoint do not meet our criteria, so we closed the centre (S1).

The Director (S1) said that traditional bureaucratic protocols tended to delay decisions to build formal schools, hence the lower number of high schools. Whenever a school was to be erected, the chiefs were first consulted, and only upon their endorsement would final decisions for building schools be made. Sometimes decisions on the location and management of a school, or another community project, would be suspended indefinitely. In addition, conflicts about management and control of funds blocked progress, as happened in one of the satellites which Masifundisane set up in 1995 where learning activities stopped within the first year of its establishment.

Several learners expressed their own views about the role of the chiefs in social matters. Although there was a choice between the government 'night schools' or 'learning centres' and the community based programmes like MCLP, the credibility of the former was tarnished by their original association with 'homeland' policies. Some learners were not keen to register at the centres located in villages under the rule and governance of chiefs:

From my point of view, the Chiefs should just allow us to use the village centre, but they must not interfere with the managers of MCLP (L3).

Oh, well, we have been fighting with them (*the Ndebeles*) for many years. I started as a youth leader for Voter education, and we had very difficult times encouraging women (*who lived in villages under Chieftancy*) to register for Voter education (L5).

Both learners and staff had experienced some levels of resistance and found it difficult to recruit pupils and even set up learning centres in village areas. One of the learners confirmed that if the central government managed all the literacy centres her progress would have been slowed down in the same way as most public services under the rule and control of local chiefs.

I could have registered at Marapong centre, but, you know people here are very slow, they are slow thinkers like some of the village leaders. That is why I came to O. R. Tambo even if it is far (L7).

Marapong centre is in an area controlled by the baNtwane Chiefs, one of whom is a member of Parliament and an African National Congress representative. Yet this learner (L7) preferred to enrol in an area (O.R. Tambo centre) renowned as 'progressive' because the groups that were involved in political activities in the eighties were vigilant and prominent. Pre-election rallies tended to be held in the stadium not too far from the learning centre. In addition, whenever there were prospects for development projects, community representatives maintained that the people should be consulted widely before decisions were made. One of the facilitators drew the researcher's attention on the way to O.R.Tambo centre to an abandoned building site and said that:

Those houses were supposed to be 'show houses' for the new government scheme, but the local constituency rejected the criteria for ownership. So they are all abandoned (S3).

All the houses that were erected for demonstration have been left as 'empty shells' for the last five years. Alternative proposals are still under negotiation and thus transparency and people-participation seem to be two of the principles endorsed. The decisions of the two learners (L5) and (L7) above also show that they are politically

aware and were able to make better decisions because they could understand the impact of traditional rule on progress in their respective villages.

The findings point to the extent to which structures in any community, at both the micro and macro level, can have an impact and an influence on the development of that community. In some ways the impact may be positive, in others the abuse of power obstructs reconstruction and development. In the context of Moutse, although the state established the first learning centres in the late 1980s, they were perceived as, and indeed were, divisive. Formal state learning centres separated the young people from adults: the young were perceived as being more privileged. When the opportunity came for adults to learn, the fewer number of adult centres in village areas where most women are, limited their opportunities and access to education.

In light of these findings, it can be seen that the pace of the development of adult and community education in Moutse has been influenced to a great extent by the dominant governmental structures and the powerful manner in which these structures direct or mis-direct the cause of development.

In terms of the purpose, the findings from Moutse do not seem to contradict the vision of ABET as articulated in the Policy which is to work toward:

a literate SA within which all its citizens have acquired basic education and training that enables effective participation in socio-economic and political processes to contribute to reconstruction, development and social transformation (ABET, Policy, 1997:9).

In this vision the goals of 'serving the needs of a diverse range of learning constituencies' through an 'enabling environment' was expressed thus by the ABET

Director (in discussion with the researcher):

The challenge we are faced with is that in the past as you know, most of the adults did not have any mechanism to come back to formal education, if they so wished. So we (the Department) had to make a strategic decision to create an enabling environment... And that would

be the purpose of any policy. Policy legislates the parameters, the principles and values that need to guide whatever you are doing (K7).

Q: How does the department create an enabling environment?

I think, government needs to provide. It needs to make resources available in the short term. Obviously, I am not naïve to think that is going to happen in the next so many years. We expect the State to take responsibility and we need financial resources. But I am saying, in the medium term, some form of funding must be made available (K7).

There is no doubt that while some learners were determined to acquire functional literacy for their own benefit, others, including the staff, considered adult basic education as ‘a service to the community’. All the staff members agreed that they were driven to help reduce the 85% illiteracy rate in their community. They were determined to address this immediate goal through direct involvement.

Some of their responses were:

I wanted to contribute to community development (F3).

...I love working with adults, during my time as chairman of (the) water project I (have) always had a desire to help people empower themselves literally (F5).

Special focus in terms of target groups are disadvantaged women. We are looking at empowering them with skills in reading and writing, life skills and skills of generating their own income. We achieved that, some of the learners initiated the clothing factory which is running now we are helping them in financial management (F1).

Their expressed determination to first serve their community appeared in the Mission Statement ²⁴ project objectives as described in the publicity pamphlet of the project. Some of the facilitators had gained experience of working with adults when

²⁴ Masifundisane seeks to contribute in ending the high illiteracy rate in Moutse through educating and engaging adults in development ventures to improve the quality of their lives.

they were employed as Voter Education Officers. Once they heard about the new project they were prepared to work for no salary for about eight months in 1994 to get the Literacy programme off the ground:

It was just one centre here at Paledi with few learners there people were volunteering and going on until we managed to secure funding from JET in 1995, that's how we started (S2).

I was approached by Themba who told me the purpose and the reasons why they considered me to take up the position, so that is how I got involved. I'm supposed to be an example and the most important thing they would not like to employ someone who, so to say is hungry and might be tempted to steal the money (Fm2).

If you look at our area Moutse, most people that are unemployed are women are staying at home and life is very hard hence we targeted that. When we started Umthombo Centre learners wanted jobs (F2).

All of the above staff members had been volunteers under the auspices of Voter Education, and none of them was trained in teaching adults. The skills required as an advice officer on general information were very different from what was expected of an adult teacher. Each of them, including those members who served on the Board of Trustees (Fm2) above, learnt through sheer determination how to run a programme for adults. They developed simple teaching aids in the process. According to the information in the five year strategic planning documents that were analysed, staff development is an ongoing process. Each year two staff members register for either an Adult Education Diploma Course or a Degree programme. All but one of the six facilitators who were interviewed were registered with a distance learning programme with the University of South Africa.

One can see from the findings that the commitment displayed by the young tutors is a manifestation of the life-long principle of service which they have acquired from their cultural upbringing. It is a principle through which the young were socialised and taught that they are first responsible for the wellbeing of their community (Bown et. al 1979). None of the project staff ever mentioned that there was no form of payment in their voluntary 'service'. They only indicated that:

after votes many people were suffering, many of them women. I volunteered in 1994 and I was 'working' at Umthombo in 1995 (F4).

When we started the Literacy Project we did not have money, we therefore asked the Standard 10 pupils to volunteer and teach adults. We were already aware of a possibility of getting Kagiso Trust funds and we promised them payment as soon as we received funding. We considered the overall aim of the project, which was development (S2).

The overall aim expressed in the above views relates to community development as a 'service', and some willingness to 'work' although there was no pay. It was later discovered from the founder member that the application for funds from Kagiso trust took longer than expected. Volunteers continued to teach without pay for more than a year. The founder members (Fm2 and Fm3) acknowledged the dedication among all the staff, that those who started with the project perceived 'work' [not in a formal sense of employment] as a social responsibility. They learned through cultural socialisation that their ethics promoted family responsibility and accountability to one's community. Also, the facilitators had a sense of belonging, since they came from the same villages as the adults they taught. From childhood, idleness in a rural and traditional society is not tolerated, so 'both boys and girls develop ambitions within their families and in their communities to be fully responsible and to contribute to the welfare of all' (Aidoo in Nnaemeka, 1998). The staff commitment to the literacy activity as a 'service' and not a 'job' reflects the culture of mutual accountability.

Both the staff and learners perceived each other as role models for what each could do for the others. Throughout the liberation struggle, women stood by to support the young people in their endeavours to achieve political liberation. The struggle was holistic and the culture of collective action was used as a strategy for mobilisation. This history helped to establish mutual trust between the young and old in the community. The young facilitators, many of whom had completed high school

education, considered their qualifications adequate as a foundation from which education for adults could be offered. This was in the spirit of '*ubuntu*': one's education is not an individual acquisition but an asset to be shared for the progress of others. It was in that spirit of African Renaissance that all community members committed themselves and lived, in order to ensure the survival of their community by offering a 'service'.

Their conviction about the value of literacy in the promotion of development was expressed in statements such as:

Most of our people in our area are illiterate, our grandmothers are suffering when they go to the Post Office to draw money, they are unable to sign or write. I want to see our elders who did not get time to have skills in reading and writing, go to class (F3).

The question of facilitating, one will open channels for our community. I took my age as an advantage for their problems (F1).

I joined the project because I had an idea of contributing and helping women, because they are the most illiterate in our area (F2).

The commitment to 'service' expressed in the above statements seems to endorse the principle of '*ubuntu*' in which service is undertaken because it is 'right' and not for 'reward'. Although it is acceptable in the context of Moutse, it raises a pertinent question whether the adult basic education and training policy takes full cognisance of the cultural values upheld by various communities. If, according to Mazrui (1990) culture provides motives for people's behaviour, and a community is rooted in values that call for collective responsibility, it remains to be discovered whether the ABET policy resonates with such a calling.

It can therefore be seen that adult basic education in this context is a 'service activity' in which young and adult learners voluntarily and unconditionally feel free to 'work'. Work is made meaningful by its reciprocal and satisfying nature. Even if

on the one hand adults do not gain immediate 'educative' benefits, while on the other hand the facilitators sacrifice themselves for no pay, both groups derive satisfaction by being of 'mutual service' to one another. Work is considered as a way of life in 'ubuntu', the social ethic which encapsulates a spiritual ideal directing people's behaviour (Teffo, 1999). Adult education and community service are linked by the cultural social system in which people feel they belong, and with which they would want to be associated.

However, the perceived meanings of 'work' and 'service' change depending on what resources are available. The major constraints (mentioned in chapter four) to the successful implementation of ABET are finance and levels of training among adult educators. Provision of 'education as a social service' by the State does not uphold similar principles of free commitment and volunteerism as 'service' as was found in Moutse.

Masifundisane continues to be regarded as a resource centre on civil matters like health, land and general information. Because of its non-formal nature and its roots in the history of people's development, members of the community feel a sense of belonging which would not be the case in formal, bureaucratic institutions. For example, two of the members from G2 expressed some satisfaction that they were able find relevant information from the MCLP offices on personal and civil matters. One was advised on 'housing matters', another had made enquiries about procedures for lodging a complaint about working conditions on a farm.

It was found that although a few members from G2 were not attending the afternoon classes, they nevertheless continued their association with MCLP. They received advice, free information, or sometimes were referred to agencies that could provide small loans for those who wanted to be entrepreneurs. They mentioned that in 1997 they had made enquiries about a money lending agency in Nelspruit. They were advised to form themselves into groups of ten, prepare and submit a proposal for funds with which they could start small scale profit making project(s). Although the

majority of the G2 members had dropped out of literacy activities, they thus kept their links with the project as a 'site for social interaction'.

This therefore illustrates that although some learners were not so enthusiastic about reading and writing, adult education is still perceived as a 'home for many'. Their social definition of literacy is not narrowly defined as merely 'reading and writing', but demonstrates a sense of belonging during the focus group discussion. It appears that MCLP is a site from which they can gather knowledge and information about resources necessary for their own economic and personal improvement. Education is therefore not perceived as mere learning, but learning for practical and social purposes. It is not taken in its narrow sense of acquiring only specific or skills offered in the classroom, but as a point of convergence where people can exchange ideas, find solutions and interact socially.

Other members from G2 have maintained their contact with MCLP even though they were not formally registered for lessons. Their active presence was noted by the researcher during the Literacy Day and the graduation event in May. Of the three cultural groups that participated during the Graduation programme, one was made up of learners who were not on a full course. They wore uniform with scarves in the African National Congress colours. Two other groups in the colourful traditional garb of the Ndebele and baNtwane, entertained the audience with well known cultural songs of this area. They displayed some degree of political consciousness and a sense of self-esteem and pride about their traditional poetry and prose. In this way education was integrated with people's music, art, dance and national pride.

When the project director was asked why some of these women and not men were prepared to contribute time, energy and commitment to the events he said that they had always volunteered and were prepared to offer 'services' in kind:

I think because the majority of learners (at MCLP) are women and they are well determined, patient and give of their time. Even among facilitators for example, Makuwa and Rachel grew up with the

programme. Some of the learners also joined when we started and have not left the project although they are not currently registered in the classes (S1).

What the director did not say was that art and culture continue to bring previously divided communities together. Poetry, songs of praise and traditional folklore are programmed in most of their annual agendas. Many of these were known to and presented by elderly women who have continued to be fully involved in many other structures in Moutse. Such commitments were not limited to the programmes organised by MCLP, the staff and learners tended to join together in many events as described earlier in chapter five - one a funeral of a former colleague in May 1998 and the graduation day. These were opportunities which reflected that participation among staff and learners was encouraged. The spirit of volunteering for service was maintained.

There seemed to be some determination to work together among the project members although reservations among each ethnic grouping prevailed:

The baNdebele did not have land. When you follow their history, they always depended on Boers, who always enslaved them. In exchange of one of their Kings who was captured and jailed, they exchanged labour and the Boers determined his release conditionally. The baNdebele had to labour indefinitely on the farms owned by Afrikaners (Fm1).

Instead of dwelling on past history, members of MCLP are now using community and non-formal education as well as culture to define their new world view and build bridges. Community events and specifically annual events for MCLP seemed to draw groups of people from diverse political backgrounds as observed during the Graduation day and the funeral event.

Because the women have maintained their informal affiliation and are consistent in their interaction with MCLP, it can be concluded that informal education continues to integrate politics, social life and community service, and that women in particular are prepared to contribute unconditionally to this process. After all, their participation in community programmes and projects is not a new practice: the social

and political circumstances in Moutse have always put them on the front line. What is new now is that they have shifted the main focus away from political differences and towards creating a shared view of communal life, very different from the separate groupings which they were forced to adopt.

It was further discovered from discussions with both groups (G1 and G2) that, although some of the women had not stayed in the literacy programme for long, they felt adequate and qualified enough to be involved in other community matters. Their willingness, and perhaps curiosity to participate in the research process, indicated that they still associated themselves positively with Masifundisane.

There was little difficulty in 'breaking the ice' in the two focus groups because they were familiar with one another. In fact, their familiarity almost delayed the group discussions because in the beginning the researcher had to allow plenty of time for them to talk generally about their welfare, children, lack of water and many unrelated issues of a communal nature. After they had relaxed, they freely agreed to participate in the initial discussions about progress with their individual activities like crocheting, raising poultry or growing vegetables and fruit vending. The common concerns expressed by those who are engaged in 'cottage activities like crocheting' were lack of financial resources, lack of knowledge about how to market their products, and transport difficulties when they needed to distribute their finished goods. However, they exchanged ideas and put forward suggestions on how to solve some of the problems.

One of them announced to the group members a tentative consultative meeting in May to which an invitation was extended to the researcher. It was a follow-up meeting to assess progress made by the group members who had tried to form themselves into business clubs in order to submit proposals for seed funding. A number of points were noted in the process. First, the confidence displayed by group members to take initiative; the fact that they persisted in working toward achieving their goals, working independently of the MCLP staff, indicated that they were in

command of the process. The freedom to own the process and manage its development is one of the indicators that MCLP not only serves a literacy agenda but that it is perceived as a site for social and economic development for those who seize the opportunity.

The above sections have addressed the questions of how ABET is perceived, conceptualised and the factors that shape its nature and purpose. It has been found that the aims and purposes of ABET are indeed shaped by local and national socio-political agendas. The aims are understood by policy planners differently from the implementers and this incongruence continues to be a platform for debating the value of adult education. On one hand, ABET is a 'process', but at a macro level it is considered a socio-political programme. Such differences, therefore determine the utility and relevance of literacy to the lives of the participants. If the learners (especially the elderly) find very limited use of acquired knowledge, then they are not motivated to stay on the programme. They continue to be associated with the project a site for cultural and social interaction. However, others take the advantage of the 'second chance' to enhance prior learning and improve their literacy skills and functional skills.

In the light of the foregoing, it can be seen that there are intricate inter-relationships between people's cultures and behaviours which have influenced the implementation of ABET in Moutse. The question therefore arises, whether ABET is regarded as a multi-faceted arena from where group and individual goals can be realised. If so, why have many learners, especially women, left the programme? Are there other factors which affect action among determined groups like those above?

Women and ABET in Moutse

Although MCLP prides itself on its consultative and collaborative history, its administrative processes and the division of labour seem to embody entrenched societal norms of gender inequality. The following examples illustrate how gender

dynamics altered when the project organised its management to fit the requirements of national education.

The statistical breakdown of the Masifundisane Literacy project (see Table 5.2) indicates that a higher percentage of learners 88%, were women compared to 12% men. According to the 1998/99 reports, there are 300 female and 55 male registered learners. It is important to note that there are 15 women facilitators to 13 men, three women in the administrative staff and two managers; and the Board of Trustees has six men and two women. The project does not have a policy on gender, but the following quotations seem to illustrate some awareness of what gender equality may mean among some of the staff:

Striking a balance between women and men, how we can strike balance, have a programme that ensures women are brought in equal footing with men, a process of bringing them on board (S1).

It is that women should be given a chance to occupy positions which were previously reserved for males, especially white males. To me women should be treated in the same level as men (S2).

The opinion of the director was that 'women's empowerment is a new concept with which social and economic imbalances in every structure of society was to be addressed. He cited the 1993 Stellenbosch poverty statistical report which indicates that the most affected, jobless category in the nation are women:

It was thus necessary not only through Affirmative Action to ensure that women are brought on board, [but also to] have jobs and ensure positions of authority (S1).

Because historically, through cultural, political dispensation, culturally [women were] relegated to second position to men. Women cannot sign for bonds without men. In the new political disposition we need to strike a balance between men and women (S1).

In his opinion, this process need not mean just 'adding numbers' but appointing capable people, a practice that MCLP began in 1994. They continue to maintain

gender equality in the staff appointments. This was evident when the Human Resource Manager pointed out that they had promoted among the first intake two female staff members to supervise and support the facilitators at various learning centres. Promotion had an effect, because when the internal examinations in 1994 were assessed, records show that all 94% of learners who passed were managed by women facilitators.

During the first external pilot examinations in 1995, similar outcomes were realised:

....because of the calibre of the facilitators...Two years later women began to assert their authority as supervisors, they were given space that empowers them. Also motivation and encouragement empowers them (S1).

Co-ordination at centres improved, learner participation was encouraged and most of the suggestions that the learners put forward were considered positively in the year plans. The director affirmed that women facilitators were productive ‘in terms of results and implementation, they excelled’. Results improved in the following years and in 1996 and 1998 the best performances were from women facilitators (See Box 3, below).

Box 3 Learners who obtained Certificates 1996, 1998.			
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
1996 Internal	140	68	00
External *(October)	76	53	10
1998 Internal	85 out of 85	55 out of 96	11 out of 50
* The first external examinations were administered by the Independent Examinations Board (IEB).			

Source: MCLP Annual Reports.

All the facilitators who performed well, including one male facilitator, were awarded certificates of recognition which were arranged by the Human Resource Manager. Their success appeared to provide a positive role model for other learners:

Some of the learners in the Mother-tongue group came to shake my hand. Since then I see them studying together and I usually find out from each of them when one of the group members is not coming to attend class (S3).

It was further noted that the motivation among women facilitators encouraged healthy peer competition within and between the centres:

The Level 2 learners promised me that next year I will see them walk up (like I did) to collect certificates of merit (S4).

The learning centres that displayed improved results received the highest number of awards which in return impacted on the morale and motivation among the learners. For example, at the O.R. Tambo centre, women who work for the Department of Works have grouped together on a pre-school project funded by the local bus company, PUTCO. A second group started a gardening club. Unfortunately, the project stopped prematurely because of shortage of water in the neighbouring villages. At Moteti, a centre which was initially managed by the Department of Education, the women have formed learning and support groups among themselves outside the tutorial sessions. They worked hard to obtain good marks in the external examinations.

All of the latter group, from the Moteti centre, tended to be the most vocal during the Learners' committee meeting that was observed by the researcher (Appendix 7). Frequent proposals and new ideas were brought up by women whose suggestions were considered and accepted. It should be noted however that women always constitute a higher number in all Learners' meetings, as the project profile shows.

Thus, for the director, women's empowerment 'depends on an individual's ability'.

Both learners and staff assert themselves positively and in creative ways that have impacted on the year plans.

Masifundisane does not promote women because they were merely being given an opportunity, but because they have shown their abilities through performance and we are transparent about our promotion criteria (S1).

The director's opinion was that if management were to be deliberately biased towards women, 'that would cause tensions, but the promotions were meant to encourage open competition'(S1). It is for the same reasons that at the initial meeting when the request for research was made, the researcher was cautioned to be sensitive about the working principles expressed and to respect the attitude of staff to gender. The research was endorsed on an agreement that although the primary concern was to 'listen to women's opinions' the fieldwork would not focus on women exclusively.

There are several points pertaining to organisational management that throw light on the gender issues raised in the discussions above. These relate to how the culture of organisations conditions the minds and shapes gender relations among the members of an institution. In this case, the schools and MCLP fitted into the common patterns in which, in rural areas like Moutse, schools are headed by men. In fact, in both primary schools where observations of lessons were conducted, the daytime principals are men. MCLP is also largely managed at programme level by men and by male Trustees. These are the critical levels where decisions are made, although the project is attempting to encourage fuller participation and representations of all staff and to incorporate suggestions from learners that are made on Learner's Day.

Over a period of two years Masifundisane has promoted experienced female facilitators to co-ordinate and manage the centre's activities. One of the facilitators (F6) still teaches a Level 1 group. In addition she has assumed a management role with (S4) to coordinate and monitor programme plans and progress in all the centres. These facilitators have, by virtue of being founder members, gained knowledge and understanding of adult education methods. They have acquired counselling and management skills on the job. Yet, with all their acquired and manifest experience one was assigned to teach at the Beginners' phase, the first two years in which the adults are taught in their local languages. The first year is a difficult year to teach. Many adults bring with them fears, others have never handled a pen in their lives. Many are apprehensive simply about learning as adults.

There is great need for counselling skills, tolerance, patience and a love for teaching if only to encourage learners to stay on.

As teachers women tend to work in the lower levels. It is not by choice that all the female facilitators teach at this level. It is because that by the end of the first two years the learners are expected to have acquired basic reading and writing before they begin numeracy. There is a perception that numeracy lessons required a good background in mathematics, a subject which many of the women facilitators in MCLP have not studied. Mathematics in many schools was previously a preferred subject for boys while the girls were directed to take subjects relating to 'care and domesticity'. Thus, because the majority of the female facilitators missed out on learning mathematics, they do not feel confident to teach numeracy.

The second point relates to the changing purpose and content of education. During the earlier period of 'people's education' the masses came together regardless of their individual and collective backgrounds to pursue a specific course of action. The political struggle embodied in people's education identified no gender, no special skills, no status, and for anyone to be involved no special knowledge was required. Yet MCLP, whose original values were grounded on 'people's power', now seems to be adopting a 'culture of dependency' as was expressed in these words of the Human Resource Manager:

Although we do not have a policy on gender, through strategic planning we encourage everybody to participate. We do that, we talk about it [sic] (he was referring to gender equality) in meetings that we encourage women facilitators to participate and feel free to express their views, but at policy level we do not have a policy dealing with women's issues. It is something that will be discussed with the Board (S2).

In order to create conditions in which self-esteem is built, the Human Resource Manager said that the concerns for gender equality at the workplace were being discussed in the staff meetings and were a matter to be presented to the Board of Trustees as soon as the project received guidance from the national office. A number on policy documents have been released from the ABET Directorate since 1995. Consequently expectations were that the same will happen for the Gender policy.

Such an attitude illustrated a number of positive factors but also a weak disposition towards gender. First, there was a willingness to recognise and accept that equality among men and women was an imperative. Yet, at the same time the Human Resource Manager seemed not to understand the difference between gender equality and women's emancipation. Although he mentioned that the project has no gender policy, he seemed to equate equality with 'mere participation' of women in discussion.

Furthermore, MCLP recognised the abilities and capabilities of its female staff as demonstrated in their classroom performance and learner results. In order to reinforce good performance the Human Resource Manager indicated that it had already been decided in the 1998 year plans that the four centre co-ordinators were going to register for a computer literacy course as an incentive, but also as part of staff development. The inclusion of women in this computer course would be coincidental because they are in the majority as centre managers, not on the basis of a considered gender strategy.

On the other hand, this determination can be weakened if the staff as a whole fail to recognise the importance of their historical experiences and achievements. Consciously or unconsciously, they are moving away from building on the strengths and creative ways with which they tackled common problems and strategies in the past; strategies of sharing information on pertinent issues and soliciting suggestions for ways forward. During the period of 'people's education' and the struggle for social justice, age, class or gender did not determine the roles that people were assigned, particularly in the political struggle. It seems that as MCLP moved toward becoming a more formal and professional organisation, there was a tendency to adopt a disempowering attitude by leaving decision-making to higher or to the central departments or even their Board of Trustees.

As the project increased its dependency on ‘external’ authority for decisions, other decisions about programme management were directed, consciously or unconsciously, against women. For example, in the current structure, women facilitators as indicated earlier, continue to be responsible only at the elementary levels as far as tutoring is concerned, while men were assigned Levels 3 even if they were not the best mathematics teachers. There was only one Level 4 at O. R. Tambo centre. teachers. Therefore, it appeared that established practices of male domination were going to limit the potential of adult education for the empowerment of women. These lessons that were observed will be described below are indicative of these findings.

Example: Lesson A

One example of a lesson in each of the centres observed represented a typical thematic pattern of interactions between learners and the facilitators. In the first at Umthombo centre, were seven learners, one of whom was a man who always sat at the back row of the class. The desks were arranged in a horseshoe shape. The lesson was a revision of “Conversions of Units” (see outline in chapter 5 – Box 1).

In the beginning, the facilitator assumed that the learners could remember the measurements that had been taught the previous week. He began by asking revision questions to which there were no responses. He then spoke in the local language, isiZulu. There was a long pause of silence as the learners thought about how to respond. Some started fiddling with rulers and two women started talking to each other. The male student who did not make an effort to talk to anyone, was engrossed with his calculator, in an effort to find an answer, perhaps. In the end the facilitator wrote the answer as

$$[4.5 \text{ cm} = 45 \text{ mm}]$$

One of the learners whispered, *‘Why is it not 40.5 mm? It is confusing,’* she said.

This learner did not ask for any further explanation although she looked baffled by the calculations written on the chalkboard. The lesson continued with other

measurements of distance, for example [1 km = 1000m]; [3 km = 3000m] with a few questions here and there. During the second hour, the class was assigned to do exercises which were discussed through questions and answers and later written up on the board.

Although the facilitator had tried to start from the known and move to the unknown, there were limitations in his method. He was not able to facilitate quick responses to his questions. He could not engage the learners fully because they did not have confidence to express themselves in English. Learners seemed to have difficulty expressing themselves in English, and the tutor was forced to resort to isiZulu when the learners were unable to provide an answer to questions, a tactic that did not improve the comprehension of the lesson because not all were Zulu speakers. However, when the facilitator invited each to write what they understood on the board, they each confidently took a turn to write the answers. At times they would check with each other to verify the answer before volunteering to write on the board.

Example: Lesson B

Another lesson on Numeracy was at the O.R.Tambo centre. Although the class was scheduled to begin at 2 p.m., the last two learners, one a male, arrived at 2:30 and the other, a mother with a child, arrived at 2:55 p.m. In order to remind the class of the measurements learnt the previous day, the facilitator drew a rectangle, a triangle and a square on the board and asked the learners to find familiar shapes in their immediate environment. The group pointed to the bricks on the wall, the books they held and the floor tiles. Once identified, they were asked to measure the sizes of the books so that they could apply their understanding of measurements to the new lesson.

Throughout the lesson the learners asked questions freely and spontaneously. One after another, each volunteered to move from their chairs to write the answers on the board and also consulted with others to check their spelling. They sought affirmation

from one another and from the facilitator each time they wrote something on the board. The facilitator then asked the class to transfer all the notes from the board into their books. It was a lively class.

After the group had drawn the three shapes in their note books, the facilitator asked:

'How big do you think some of the rooms in your homes are?, e.g. the kitchen, bedroom and the dining room?' (F1).

That question was problematic and full of assumptions. The facilitator assumed that all learners came from homes divided into similar forms or shapes of room as in his example. Second, he assumed that in their homes there would be kitchens and dining rooms instead of one rectangular room or a round one in a rondavel which are common in some of the villages of Moutse. After the researcher had been to the homes of some of the women who were interviewed, it was realised that the facilitator's assumptions were wrong. Three of the interviewees lived in homes which were still under construction. The shapes and use of the rooms were different from those referred to as examples in the lessons.

For example, maMkhabela's (L7) home consisted of a one rectangular room no kitchen or a dining area yet. The building had a temporary building at the back with the foundation visible to anyone entering the yard. On the far left corner of the yard was a tin shack from which she sold fruit and vegetables. MaNgema's home, an L-shaped house, also incomplete, had windows still blocked with stiff cardboard and thick rods as they could not afford to buy windows. The first room in which the interview took place had one bed along the wall. The two sewing machines were on the table in the middle of the room. It seemed as if most of the daily chores were done in this single room. Therefore it was inappropriate for the facilitator (knowing or unknowingly) to assume that the learners' homes had the type of divisions he was asking about. In the situations above, the foundations of the homes had not been divided into the three examples given by the facilitator. In addition, the difficulty with the questions posed was that they were too leading and did not allow learners to

use their own imagination. Because the majority of learners were women, he also limited his examples to the domain perceived to be the place of women, the kitchen, bedroom or dining room.

An interesting finding about the one male student who frequently arrived late was noted. In order to attend the lessons he exchanged places with a younger brother who attended formal school during the morning while he watched the cattle. Each time the younger brother was late from formal school, he was also delayed. It was also found that, as his home was in a village, his homestead was not built with modern divided rooms, but consisted of a large rectangular undivided room and a rondavel. He was thus unable to imagine what '*the other rooms in your home*' would mean. Yet it was disclosed by the centre co-ordinator that his initial interest and enthusiasm for numeracy was far above that of the rest of the group. His grandparents owned a number of cattle and he was fascinated by the prospect of understanding numbers so that he could apply his understanding to what he saw every day in the kraal. Even if he had been asked the shape of the kraal it would have made no sense at all because the sides of the kraal and the distances between each are never as straight as the shapes and lines they were taught in the class. A better teacher might have made use of these different types of homes, shapes and used the curved wall of the kraal to show different types of measurements, lines and distances.

The lessons were therefore beyond this student's comprehension, and did not appeal to his eager interest in mathematical understanding. This one lesson was detached from his social world and had no practical consequences. As was the case with the elderly women in the G1 focus group interview, this learner drifted along in a numeracy class that could not enrich his understanding and widen the horizon of mathematical application for him. This approach illustrates that the 'local' worlds from which the learners came were not sufficiently integrated to inculcate effective and practical understanding of the 'wider' worlds.

During the interval a probing question to the facilitator about his choice of teaching methods was posed and he responded:

I use participatory methods or a discussion method but before I was trained [in adult teaching] we used to lecture a lot (F1).

Q: Do any of the methods help your learners gain interest about women's issues?

Yes, they do, in a sense that on women issues, women begin to see and realise that life is blind. It means every person for themselves, so the methods try to create independent minds [with a big sigh]. You find that in rural areas men are away and women have to participate, but generally they take a back seat and say men must go on (F1).

Q: How do you encourage the learners to discuss issues that affect women and men?

Although we were not focusing on it, [gender equality] we would look into questions of rights, rights in general (F1).

The example given above in conjunction with the dynamics in the class observations, highlights some issues pertinent to the question of why the content of teaching may not be emancipatory for women. These are (i) language (ii) power of language use (iii) how gender equality, including the onus for the responsibility for gender equality, was perceived.

In both lessons language stifled participation among the learners. The facilitators were forced to resort to a local language to encourage discussions and active participation. Yet, that option did not guarantee a better comprehension of the lesson, nor a critical engagement in the learning process. The learner who asked 'Why is it not 40.5 mm?' for example, was not confident to pursue the question because she did not have the confidence to express herself in English. When the facilitators chose to speak in isiZulu, they were not considerate of the non-Zulu speakers in the class as some spoke seTswana and others isiNdebele. They were also insensitive to the home circumstances of the learners when they asked questions about the sizes and shapes of rooms. When a personal opinion of the facilitator was

solicited on gender equality, he changed from the use of 'I' to 'we'. He did not want to identify with or take responsibility for the subject matter.

Such insensitive approaches and 'distanced' responses indicate that unless the facilitators themselves are sensitised to gender issues, and understand the effects of male domination in society, they will not be able to generate critical thinking among the learners. At a personal level, the facilitators displayed lack of awareness and insensitivity to the background of their learners and a limited understanding of how to introduce living and meaningful contexts into the lessons on mathematics.

Three of the staff members (F1 and F5) as well as (Fm2) spoke of equality between men and women as a general matter to be dealt with under Human Rights, and hence not accorded the vigorous attention it deserves. The simplistic concern was expressed in the following comments:

Yes, gender relations at Masifundisane is good, since I've been here relationships between men and women have improved a lot from giving more women positions to lead (F5).

Q: But giving women positions does not mean that they are treated equally as men. How else do you encourage meaningful and equal practices in the project?

Well, each of the staff know that we have our rights to take control when we can. It is our Human Right regardless of who we are and MCLP encourages that practice (F5).

One of the members who serves on the Board of Trustees gave this response when asked how gender equality is encouraged in MCLP:

In our planning all ideas (including gender equality) are taken into consideration (Fm2).

Q: Can you mention specific ideas that you encourage to promote equality between men and women?

We address gender equality within the context of democracy. We know that there are many misconceptions that are going around, for example, let us take the arguments on how the project allocate responsibilities. This is a sensitive issue because once you talk about gender equality men think that women are going to be in command. But together, we begin by addressing the misconceptions so that we start from the same level of understanding (Fm2).

This response from a member illustrates that as a Board they are sensitive and prepared to direct MCLP, but there is no deliberate plan for systematising and inculcating a gender supportive structure. The founder member also acknowledge that there may be fears among those who do not understand issues of gender equality (Fm2 above). In addition, there are varying degrees of awareness as in the case of the facilitator (F5) who did not want to take personal responsibility for matters of gender equality. He was not even aware of the activities that some of the learners are involved in. For example many of the women at O.R. Tambo and particularly in his class *'do not generally take a back seat'* as the facilitator responded. Three women are already running entrepreneurial projects in their homes. In this particular group two women, both in the individual interview group, joined the literacy project with experience of running tuck shops. Their continued interest was confirmed when they affirmed how knowledge of mathematical calculations enabled them to learn budgeting, costing and how their calculation of profits has improved:

Even at home I help my old man with budgets and decide how we use the money, including his profits from ranking the taxi (L5).

Another learner was enthusiastic because since she had learnt budgeting she was able to plan her orders:

At first I used to buy when I wanted, but now I must decide first how much material I need, how much is for transport and make sure I save my profit (L4).

The above findings are interesting as they provide indications of the varied perceptions that the staff and learners have of adult basic education, its history, purpose and nature and how these perceptions influenced their attitudes to gender equality. The findings illustrate the extent to which integration of education with people's history, politics, and culture, shape the nature and purpose of adult basic education in MCLP. The data also illustrates how gender inequalities continue to be perpetuated as 'a hidden agenda' in the learning processes.

Women's definitions of Women's emancipation

What follows are findings concerning women's perceptions of gender equality and how they defined practices that promoted gender equality and equity. By design, this research was originally intended to explore exclusively women's definitions of emancipation; however, in the context of the fieldwork the research was adapted with additional data collected from opinions of men who were part of the sample.

The section is divided into two parts, moving from the general to the specific. The first part provides a reflective overview of the historical roles of women in Moutse in terms of their social and historical conditions. The second part discusses their contemporary positions in the community, what they have achieved from acquired knowledge and learned skills and how they aim to use the acquired knowledge.

The position and conditions of South African women were affected by an oppressive and racially discriminating system which existed for more than forty-eight years. At the same time, women stayed at the forefront of the struggle and agitated for political

change. The story of South Africa would be different if women had not persisted in the manner described in previous chapters. Such a history places women, including those from Moutse, in a position where they perceive women's progress '*inqubela yomphakathi*' largely in relationship to their political involvement.

When Themba invited me to join MCLP he said that we will be involved in activities to develop our community (Fm1).

Q: What kind of development was he talking about?

Well, you see, I told him that for a long time we have been involved in development ... when we were fighting for land, for water pipes. That for me was development. But he was more concerned with women who are not educated in Moutse. For me I think he wanted to tackle '*inqubela yomphakathi*' real change for all and for women without education because after all we [women] have been involved in political development (Fm1).

Another opinion about social change, '*inguquko*' was expressed by L7 and the members of G2 who in their opinions change came about as a consequence of political change, but also as a benefit for women so that full emancipation could be realised in the future.

It was found that seven women (G2) associated women's progress '*inqubela yomphakathi*' with the political achievements of a well known community activist, maKompe who is now seen as the Parliamentary spokesperson for women in rural areas. Prior to 1994, the learners said that they did not own a local radio station from which they could hear one of their own speak, let alone address issues that affected women openly. One of the learners commented:

Yes, even on the television I heard her (*maKompe*) speak. They were discussing that women can take decisions in government so that they can progress. Yes! (L2).

She is known for her charisma, leadership skills and constructive advice from which the Moutse people have benefited. The result of her leadership was the establishment of the first local community radio station. Her strategic contributions to youth programmes and projects for returning exiles are well known. The interviewees acknowledge the fact that in her case, although she was not highly educated, this is not considered a hindrance to meaningful political participation. After all, throughout the past twenty years, Moutse people worked with her up to the current period when she was appointed to the highest levels of governance. She is regarded as the voice of women and a mentor for young and old in the rural areas, and she commands respect. Political advancement, in their minds, is not considered a career path but associated with and linked to community involvement, concern for social improvement and a drive for positive change for all.

The various historical events and ethnic divisions created by apartheid enhanced critical awareness among women so that the politics of racial discrimination were seen as an opportunity for exerting local power. The acquisition of Parliamentary seats by women from rural communities was not considered a 'woman's privilege' but seen as an affirmation that they had empowered themselves through action, commitment and credible leadership to be where they were. This attitude was further explored by asking the women who else they considered mentors for women's achievements.

One interviewee mentioned the names of three well known former political activists, all but one currently holding ministerial positions. One is the Minister of Health, another a former Minister of Welfare and the last an ordinary Member of Parliament whose previous political record and association was in general social work activism known to grassroots communities in South Africa:

In today's government women are allowed to lead, like the mother of health, Nkosazana Zuma, mother Winnie Mandela, they are many man! (sic), they are many like Sanki in the housing [ministry], now they (women) can, they are many (L5).

Another respondent acknowledged that women could now own land, and build their houses on their own 'plots', which measure more than 3 to 5 hectares:

Today's government is good. Even us women, we realise that there is an opportunity to do (be active) without help from men. Women have the ability to progress independent of men. Yes (L4).

According to these women such achievements were associated with the new democracy but are also perceived as a true reflection of leadership. This is because women ministers commanded authority in their official positions. One of the notable differences to which the respondents referred to was that the 1994 political have acknowledged women and included African women in the decision making structures, a move unknown in the past because of racial and sexual discrimination. What the women from Moutse were affirming was that in the new democracy there is space for women from low levels in society and from rural communities to assume their rights and take advantage of the opportunities.

In the first focus group (G1), reference was also made to a local woman artist, Nothembi, a solo guitar player who sings Ndebele folk tunes. She discovered Project Literacy (an adult education programme) while she was a domestic worker in Pretoria. Through literacy her life changed from that of a working domestic helper in Pretoria to that of a widely known entertainer. She motivates a number of learners in the country whenever she is invited to talk of her personal experiences as a formerly illiterate domestic worker. She sang and motivated other adults during the Literacy Day celebrations and encourages others because she is now pursuing further education. She has been invited to entertain graduating learners at Project Literacy and at other local in Moutse and national events. Some of the members of

Masifundisane were impressed by her performance at one of the local events in 1997.

There was a shared opinion among the interviewees, both women and men, that political success of local and national leaders was not associated with 'masculinity' per se, a 'right' exclusive to men. Instead, as one of the founder members of MCLP (Fm2) indicated, the achievements of women in leadership could be traced to the various roles that they played in the past:

You know when you look at life in the past, I might be wrong. In the past there was great understanding between men and women. Women were really respected and whatever men used to do they used to discuss with wives on all matters, then you know that something is positive. In fact the emphasis was on respecting the wife. When there were differences they were easily resolved. People were not individualistic in the way of approaching problems (Fm2).

He believed that the advancement of women is an outcome of the degree to which each leader took a participatory interest in community matters. According to this founder member, history repeats itself and some elements of history that are valuable manifest themselves in different forms today.

This observation is affirmed by literature in the second chapter that in some African countries women in pre-colonial times were not merely consulted but played significant roles in society (Nnaemeka 1998). Some examples listed were the all-female battalions of Dahomey, and later the queen of Asante, who sought to protect their empires against invaders. Another historic veteran, Yaa Asantewaa led the insurrection against the British during the early 20th century. Numerous examples of female political leadership can be cited such as the Igbo women of Eastern Nigeria who forced the British to move their headquarters from Calabar to Lagos in 1920; and the Mau Mau General Muthoni, who was at the forefront of agitation in Kenya (Aidoo, in Nnaemeka, 1998).

A more current example in which the influential role of a woman was significant in decision-making in Moutse, was mentioned during the interview with the baNtwane chiefs. A renowned woman, maNkosi, although not royal was privately consulted whenever there were difficult issues to solve in the '*kgotla*', 'the royal kraal'. The chiefs solicited advice from her. It was a customary role fully practised in respect of major decisions during times of war. The chief of the Sekhukhune in the North, where the baNtwane originate, inculcated respect for and appreciation of women's wisdom in community affairs. The chiefs confirmed that this practice is still maintained. Although the information was not openly mentioned during the interview session, this point was communicated to the researcher on the way out of the interview room.

It was a significant point to be acknowledged by a local elder. It meant that the role of women in village decision-making was accorded high status, although traditionally women were not allowed to attend what were then exclusively men's meetings, the '*kgotla*'. Women had indirect but strategic input in matters too difficult for men to solve by themselves. It seems that over time men have come to realise the importance of including women in matters that are of social and political importance. What was known as '*kgotla*' or '*inkundla*', in the past has changed to '*umhlangano*', a 'village meeting', and the opinions of women as well as their suggestions are accepted openly and directly.

In fact, the findings indicate that politics and the sociology of humanity are not separate entities. As Zuma (1999) states, pre-colonial, pre-Christian and pre-apartheid history affirm that the family structures, politics, economic, religious and legal systems were integrated with people's own cultures and thus determined how people lived and related to one another. It is therefore important to be aware of, and through adult education highlight, the role of history, the role of women in that history, the effects of patriarchal and matriarchal systems so as to understand better how South Africa and also the continent can be re-built (Zuma, 1999).

As already mentioned, women in Moutse district were affected by the migratory labour system. Such conditions forced women to be in sole charge of families for a long time while men worked in the mines. Women took care of the home, the land and other community responsibilities, a situation that Watson (1998) calls 'the sick advantage of apartheid'. Watson's notion can be seen in the same light as 'the so-called Black matriarchy' a Eurocentric theory which suggests that the depletion of Afro-American men during slavery gave women an opportunity to develop a strong female persona. Nnaemeka (1998) objects to the notion of a 'female persona'. She holds the opinion that it was not by mere circumstance of being left in charge that women took the reins, but an innate sense of responsibility.

Nonetheless the fact that the absence of men in Moutse did force women and young people to assert themselves in situations that called for survival cannot be dismissed. Women took care of the families, managed the social and agricultural activities, were in the forefront of community activism and thus learnt at times to work alongside the younger generations most specifically when dismantling apartheid. They bonded well and were always ready to take part. But this bond did not originate from the apartheid era alone. It derived also from the fact that rural communities survived on subsistence farming which depended on all members of the family to provide labour. Working together was part of their way of life although there were communities where large families were at times encouraged for providing labour.

The old tradition of working together which recognised equality among people has been adopted by Moutse women to rebuild gender relations. In the process they wanted to re-awaken men to the fact that in some African communities equality is still a great virtue. Equality was not considered a simplistic notion, because this would be a gross denial of the distortions of gender relations manifest in patriarchal societies. But it was based on equity with reverence, which says 'you are because I am, the spirit in you makes us who we are' (Mbingi and Maree, 1995:24). If *I* am to survive, *you* must survive first.

When the staff at MCLP said that they ‘wished for a literate community’; these wishes were put into practice when they volunteered to serve on the programme. In addition, each of the women learners interviewed (L1, L4, L5, L6 and L7) started projects ‘to help others’. When they described the meanings of ‘*ingqubela yamakhosikazi*’ ‘women’s emancipation’ as modelled by their Parliamentary representative they said that her achievements were grounded on her determination to lead and serve others first. Their interpretation of ‘progress’ can be seen within the principles of ‘*ubuntu*’ whereby they are individually and collectively ‘serving’ or ‘volunteering’ - in the latter case, appointed to the MCLP project to serve others in the manner that says: ‘*I*’ was sacrificed in the spirit of ‘*others*’ – *ubuntu*.

It can be noted from earlier responses (Fm1, L2, L5, L7) that the women of Moutse agitated throughout the period of political struggle alongside the young people and the men in the area. They discouraged an exclusively female participation, and did not want their endeavours in rebuilding community structures to be perceived as ‘anti-men’. They adopted holistic strategies ‘in which men are to be transformed as co-partners in the process of achieving equality’ (Fm1). The respondent said that they used three major strategies: the participation of women in voter education prior to the 1994 elections; dissemination of information about land ownership; and song and dance that conveyed messages about the relationships between women and men in society.

One of the women (Fm1) elaborated on their strategies: whenever their organisations were preparing for leadership or any local elections, their strategy was to hold meetings among themselves first to identify potential and reputable candidates. They nominated individuals who commanded community respect. They were very assertive in canvassing men to support their nominees.

The women wanted their votes be endorsed not only by themselves but also by men who supported the nominated candidates on merit and not out of sympathy.

Yes, we stressed this strategy. I met with Thelma Letlhaka, when I mentioned that women's empowerment is a difficult phenomena. You know during (local) election, we've got to tell these men (the interviewee replied with high pitched voice) that one of the criteria at elections is that if they elected men only, they disqualified. We need to have 60% men and 40% women representation (Fm1).

Q: Why did you decide on these percentages?

You see, we have to be realistic about our women. Many of them are still very quiet when we go to meetings. Sometimes they can say yes, even if they do not understand - especially those that are illiterate (she emphasised). So we have to take one step at a time and build on our progress (Fm1).

In this way the interviewee pointed out that women were assured that the vote carried a full mandate from both sexes on the basis of understanding and full recognition of merit and not as a mere gesture or tokenism.

She said that once they realised their goals in one structure they applied the same principles in other structures where it might be applicable. For example, the standing quota in the Community Resource and Development Committee (CRDC), one of the fundraising structures in which maMadlala is a Trustee, is 60% men and 40% women. The representation of women in the new structures was a further consolidation of the significant roles women played in their past history, when they were advisors to the men's councils of war. maMadlala prepared women during the monthly meetings to understand the importance of this history; to learn how they could use the power of caucusing on common issues like land rights, health rights and, equally, representation in decision making.

maMadlala acknowledged that the women were apprehensive at first about the sensitivity of men once their status was challenged in matters such as land rights. Her strategy was to talk about land rights in such a manner that men realised that their families should be the first to inherit the family land. She pointed out that

prior to 1995, women were not entitled by law to own land and many families lost out on their properties if the 'head' of the family died, a sore point for many men in Moutse. Such risks made men vulnerable and keen to seek advice from women and thus they were better prepared to understand how equitable practices could be achieved. With other sensitive issues like domestic sexual practices (abusive tendencies between mothers-in-law and their daughters-in-law; between husbands and wives or among family members), matters which were very difficult to handle, they used song and dance to get the messages across.

This could indicate that women were beginning to move from the psycho-social approach and to a structural approach to women's emancipation. With the former, change occurs from within; it is propelled by self-discovery and manifests itself in individual actions where women take control to change their situations, as is the case with Nothembi, maMadlala and maLetlhake. Other feminist approaches advocate a total change of structural systems and practices that promote women's oppression. The latter is considered more radical with greater chances for a transformed society in which the social systems have changed. At a personal level, there is evidence that each of the women above have gone through a process of self discovery and self re-awakening. Women have discovered and know how to create a new world for themselves and for others. Whereas the feminist cause supported movements for women's liberation, women's focus and women's concerns, the findings illustrate that these Moutse women were promoting gender equality as an emancipatory process, in order to build understanding between women and men.

Moutse women seem to have begun working beyond the constraints at a local level. Their self esteem is the basis of their drive to ameliorate other people's lives, both women's and men's, so that women's progress contributes to an improved life in their communities, as will be seen from the two examples below.

This section will provide accounts from five of the women who felt they had been empowered by adult education programmes. They have asserted their leadership

capabilities and to illustrate how personal change has manifested itself in benefits for both the individual and the community.

One of the interviewees, maJiyane (L1), joined Masifundisane in 1995 because she wanted to improve her schooling beyond standard four which she passed in 1977. Prior to enrolling at Masifundisane she had tried two business ventures: one in which she sold fruit and vegetables and the other as a dress designer. Her mentor was a local woman who recognised her skills and thus motivated her to take up a training course. Her association with the mentor convinced her that she could also impart the skills to others in her community. This was possible because she perceived her role as filling a gap and co-ordinating efforts to set up a business as a seamstress in which a number of her unemployed neighbours would find employment. She was inspired and gained knowledge on gender equality from listening to local radio talk shows on women's roles in the community in AIDS education, Human Rights and Land issues, which were discussed at 10 am on the radio every week day. The talk shows, in her opinion, reached a large number of listeners (including her ageing mother) and she did not see why the younger generations should miss out on such opportunities to gather information:

My mother belongs to the traditional older generation, you know how adults are, don't you? But at times they can comprehend what is being taught through the radio (L1).

As far as she was concerned, the ground had been prepared and information was more freely available in this new democracy than before. It was disseminated in the local languages and those with initiative could take the lead if they were trained for specific skills and exposed to entrepreneurial training.

maJiyane believed that 'if we study and pass we may get jobs in future' because '*isikhathi sa manje sidinga infundo*,' 'in today's world education is needed'. She acknowledged that she had acquired her entrepreneurial abilities and business skills

when she was a vegetable and fruit vendor. She was determined that, if she improved her literacy and numeracy skills, she would progress better and faster in her business ventures.

Women's emancipation for maJiyane began with '*umuntu onesifiso*', 'awareness of one's wishes' and a recognition of '*ukhono onakho*' one's abilities and interests in life. Once these were realised and combined with literacy, it would be possible to achieve one's aims in life. One of her aims was to build up her home business, recruit and teach about 26 young unemployed people how to sew:

Much depends on one's desire, determination and one's interest. If women have a wish with no interest I would not progress. I realised that I like this type of work [sewing] and with it there is progress. For me progress will be achieved if I help some of the unemployed young people in this area (L1).

Out of her first profits in 1996 she was able to make improvements to her house and purchased a van with which the family delivered vegetables in the community for profit. Sometimes she hired the van out on days when the elderly needed transport for going to collect their pensions.

Although a soft spoken and unassuming person, maJiyane showed that she could assert herself to achieve her goals. Initially her husband was reluctant when she worked away from home leaving the ageing parents by themselves. They have no children of their own and her husband was home only at the end of the week. MaJiyane found a solution to this problem. She decided to bring all the materials to the house where she continued to work. She later recruited three other people, a man and two women, to join her in the business, which immediately realised profits during the first 12 months from April 1997. Out of this achievement, which she said was remarkable, she is working towards setting up as a seamstress in Dennilton,

to recruit unemployed people and produce uniforms for local schools and church groups.

She did not consider patriarchal domination as a problem because she was convinced that her educational and economic achievements would change any negative attitudes. Firstly, through her husband who had already become supportive, and secondly by contributing to the advancement of her relations as well as by creating employment for a few unemployed people in her village:

My brother in law was not so appreciative of my success and asked my husband that I am rather talkative and confident now that I consider myself wealthy. Yet he is unemployed and living under the support and care of his wife who goes to an extent of buying clothes for him. The critical issue here is to work, is it not? This means my husband will realise that as I generate income and this might change his attitude (L1).

Emancipation for maJiyane begins with self assertion, getting to know one's special abilities, creating the means of developing one's own skills and furthering one's knowledge through the practical application of acquired knowledge and trained skills.

Similar concepts were expressed by another woman, maNgema (L4) who recognised that women's emancipation happens when individuals are aware of social changes in the community:

Times have changed, it is easy to find one's potential. In the past women were meant to take care of the home and rear children. If you had a desire to go to school, you would proceed only up to standard 2. But today, (schooling) is no problem (L4).

She had always wanted to be a seamstress, but did not have the registration fees. She joined forces with her husband to raise R350 so that she could start a three-week

sewing course. It was a full time course where they were taught how to design patterns, cut and put them together. The medium of instruction was seSotho and isiZulu. Upon completion her husband was unemployed and she sought ways of helping him.

My aim in joining the sewing group was to help my husband and family (L4).

She joined maJiyane's group and their first successful project was to produce uniforms for the local church group and local clubs. As soon as she realised that they were progressing, she was encouraged to enrol in adult basic education by her husband. Later she joined the sewing group on a full time basis.

She said that in the old days women were meant to be home makers, while the men went to work. If they were lucky enough to go to school they ended up at primary levels as the interviewees (L4, L6, L8) later confirmed. They indicated that in the past, they were expected to make domestic responsibilities a priority instead of advancing their education. But now that the country has democratic systems, there is much more awareness about gender equality. There is more information about equal rights (as L4, L2 and Fm2 above) which is exchanged at local meetings, in schools and at the banks; open debates about gender and the position of women in the community are encouraged at local events including pension days. This open discourse has increased since the period of voter education. Thus, political emancipation has heightened personal freedom for maNgema. If it were not for their involvement in preparing for the elections and participation in actual voting, the rights of women would not have been realised. Opportunities to free themselves from old conservative family practices encouraged them to take a new step in life. She was cautious, however, pointing out that not everyone is aware of such opportunities:

Freedom for women has been significant. Anyone who is still living under oppressive family conditions will encounter a problem and miss the opportunity for freedom (L4).

It is remarkable that as she takes advantage of the opportunities available for women, her husband, who is very supportive, also acknowledges that times have changed. He pointed out that the roles of women and men are different and sometimes overlap for the betterment of all. What was perceived as a man's role, for example, driving, is now not a matter of gender:

You know the situations with women have changed in the present times. There were many regulations. Women were not expected to be about in the evenings, they could not drive cars around without the company of their husbands. Women would not do that in the past as they would lose their public image and credibility by roving around by themselves in the night (L3).

Throughout the interview maNgema displayed leadership qualities, such as a quick mind to produce new thoughts. She was also quicker at remembering events in their lives. While her husband scratched his head when asked about his building career, she quickly recalled the dates by associating them with family events (e.g. the death of her father-in-law at the commencement of the building course training). She remarked how useful the numeracy skills have been for her understanding. She said that mathematical knowledge has enabled her to understand how to use measurements in cutting designs and ordering stock material; how to apply percentages when budgeting and integrating her skills with day to day use of money. She was able to evaluate and compare this with how she used to manage her business prior to joining the literacy classes.

Ngema (L3), on the other hand, associated the emancipation of women with 'enlightenment'. Through his previous limited schooling (up to standard two), he was exposed to reading and writing in his mother tongue only. When he found an opportunity to travel beyond the national borders to Namibia, Zimbabwe and Venda, he faced difficulties with foreign languages. He discovered that illiteracy (in other

languages and cultures) was a major problem: *'lapho ngabona khona ukuthi ukungafundi ngathi inkinga kakhulu'*, 'it was during my travels as a long-distance driver that I discovered that illiteracy is a major problem'. Adult education was enlightening; it provided him with a better and broader understanding of issues. People were motivated if they had an understanding that came with exposure to new situations, new interactions, different associations from one's usual circle of friends and activities. Such exposure opened doors to new forms of knowledge and attitudes to life. His views on working with women also benefited him and further enlightened about understand gender equality.

His interaction with the sewing group strengthened his conviction that women have some abilities similar to men, and he said that:

now that we started the sewing project [he raised his voice] there are no differences between female and male careers. Today women can build, they can drive. Just what is left to change are the attitudes of people who still think that women have specific jobs and men have specific jobs (L3).

Three other women, maMashigo (L5), maMakuwa (L6) and maMkhabela, were all managing home businesses. The first two were running a stall as vegetable vendors at their homes, and the third was a vendor in local high school premises where she sold snacks at lunch time. All three confirmed that their entrepreneurial skills were enhanced and improved as a result of participating in the adult education programme:

The literacy programme has been of great help to me. I was always lagging behind because I stopped schooling when I was young. My parents died and I did not have money to proceed. I learnt mathematics which helped me in many things, like percentages and (to calculate) averages which I did not know. Now I understand these calculations. I was in business before coming to Masifundisane where we were introduced to the use of calculators to determine percentages. We were taught how to measure in metres and this has been of great help (L5).

Indeed, the literacy programme has changed my life. I am more able to run my home business, I understand how to calculate profit after sales. I am able to help children with homework, especially the young one who asks for my help (L6).

The next example illustrates how the interviewee's return to education has had positive effects not only for herself but for her teenage son whose future prosperity was concerning her.

I thank God for answering my prayers ever since I started school. You see, my 17 year old son in standard five was very playful and I was not sure of what use was schooling for him. I thought he was sick or something. But ever since I enrolled for schooling I have discovered the importance of education. I told my children that there was nothing possible for them without education. Later he was saved (referring to his commitment and diligence) to school and today he is the one who guides me. You see? (L7).

For maMkhabela literacy has brought understanding, particularly about how to change the traditional customs and practices in family life '*inakho, imfundo iyayi jika*', 'education changes one's understanding':

Education opens people's minds including those not learned. When you are literate you discover a lot, but without literacy your mind remains closed. Do you realise that literacy opens one's thinking capacity and understanding? Education brings enlightenment with which women pursue their independence – from traditional and oppressive practices (L7).

In addition to personal improvement, the learners perceived women's emancipation in relation to economic emancipation whereby they would not be solely dependent on financial support from men. In pursuit of economic independence those who had cottage/home businesses considered themselves able to help their husbands who were mainly working away from home.

The interviewees realised that emancipation is possible if women can utilise their natural gifts/skills *'nkare bomme ge re ka sebedisa matsogo a rena re ka u thusa muphakathi was rena'* (L6), 'if we can use our natural talents we can make a great contribution to our community'. Women who fail, according to maMakuwa, lack self determination. Although there might be obstacles along the ways, or also failures among course leaders, individual determination to succeed can always pull one through:

I have told myself that the time has come for women to be independent in these changing times, freedom [political] affords some of us an opportunity for independence (L6).

Conclusion

The findings have provided evidence that earlier forms of adult basic education in Moutse had been a vehicle through which some of the people achieved social awareness. Through informal basic education, women generally had become empowered by seeking facts and internalising information and also developed critical minds: knowledge about land issues, how land and politics were used as a divide and rule tactic, knowledge about their environment, their rights and how power had manifested itself at different times in their histories. Issues about land appropriation by the Afrikaners, who settled in Moutse, and then later the ethnic conflicts between the clans provided them with insights –'really useful knowledge' about themselves and about powers that have ruled them. Once they analysed the information, they rebelled against injustice and learned how to fight for what was just and rightfully theirs. The successes of land right claims encouraged them to continue to face the struggle towards their political liberation. Thus they consider ABE to be a process of continuing the political liberation toward achieving social transformation. The latter may realistically be achieved when living conditions in Moutse have generally changed for the better.

Although political liberation from apartheid has been achieved, by itself it has not been enough as it does not free women from class, gender and economic hardships. Literacy is upheld as a very necessary tool at a personal as well as group level. Functional literacy is one of the ways which the staff and particularly some of the (G1) women interviewed, consider important to achieve class, gender and economic emancipation. The value of literacy can be gauged according to its relevance, utility and level of integration with the culture of the people concerned. The findings revealed that there are distinctly different age groups with varying motivations to learning. Each age category will find the use of literacy meeting different needs. As the policy defines the framework, those who decide to acquire functional and technological skills (G1) will be at a greater advantage over those whose concerns are of a social nature.

In conclusion therefore, the findings suggest that the field of adult education is a contested and controversial arena. To a great extent, knowledge is determined and shaped within structures with conflicting interests. Traditional structures, cultural, religious and to a greatest extent, economic institutions had a great influence on the development of the pace of educational change in Moutse. Each of the above structures with inherent 'cultures' shaped and motivated people's actions, but most critically also determined people's attitude to gender equality, women's emancipation and power relations. Although the women referred to emancipation as '*inqubela yomphakathi*', 'community progress', their perceptions were affected by the inequality of gender 'cultures' and practices within their structures. For example, women are only beginning to be recognised in traditional meetings, because they have effected positive representation of women in local structures and continue to assume senior positions in the MCLP project.

Whereas men consider gender as a general matter that can be addressed with human rights concerns, women consider gender as an all encompassing matter which should be reconstructed by adopting an all inclusive inter-disciplinary approach. Whatever new strategies men and women need to understand how socio-economic systems in

the past had negative effects on the community. As a result women suffered, but in return men were alienated from familial and community structures. Women in Moutse base their reconstruction plans on gender equality. They see equity as a departure point to help to rebuild a gender balanced society. This is an approach which requires further questioning: does ABET encourage this process in practice?

It has been seen, also, that policy-making processes were also shaped and influenced by the 'cultures' of the dominant institutions external to the domain of the ABET beneficiaries. These institutions included the state, the stakeholders, programme designers and programme implementers, each with their own interests and not in synchrony. Resulting from these difficulties arose some implementation problems of adult basic education in its 'new' form. Indeed, policy-making is not a linear process that can be translated from one stage into another in sequence. The disjuncture between the vision and reality is a problem which remains to be addressed. Further elaboration of the gap between policy and practice and the implications of these findings will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Seven

Discussions and Implications of the Research Findings

The findings in the previous chapter indicate how through adult education, women began by acquiring relevant and ‘really useful knowledge’, by raising consciousness to change the attitudes of others in the home, within their community and in the few organisations of which they were members. They began by individually acknowledging their own abilities, and their potential strengths, and sought opportunities to nurture their group’s capacities.

The attitudes of Moutse women exemplify the character of a women’s movement which is not self-contained, but a dynamic force addressing unjust material, political and cultural laws. This movement was part of the broader social and popular movement (Small and Kompe, 1991; Bernstein, 1992; Meer, 1997; Taylor, 1997). Women extended ‘group consciousness’ when they participated as “agents of change” in the process of participating in the political circles of their communities. However, it may be argued that this type of empowerment still lacks ‘real’ power, with which women can fully influence decisions and gain greater control over resources. The issue has been whether, in addition to political liberation, adult education has played any role in the emancipation of women? How have women experienced the changes in their lives and how do they describe the changes.

The focus of the thesis has been to discover from a small group of women in one rural area in Moutse, Mpumalanga their perceptions of what they are doing by becoming involved in ABET programmes – do they see these as liberatory or as a means of acquiring skills and competencies. Also to investigate whether adult education has provided women with a ‘second chance’ to develop themselves, and whether their energies can be nurtured within the ‘formal’ format, of the ‘new’ ABET policy and the Multi-Year Plan. These developments, as previously outlined in the third chapter,

were inherently linked to traditional African values; to the historical challenges of the inequities of apartheid; to popular movements aligned to the overthrow of apartheid; to economic sanctions imposed by trading countries, and more recently, to the macro forces of globalisation.

This chapter begins by discussing the findings of the research and its implications in terms of theories of empowerment, in the field of adult basic education and training generally in South Africa and specifically in a rural community of Moutse.

The study has shown that ABE, over the years, has taken different forms, including the politics of resistance, empowerment and finally of political emancipation. The learners and staff in Moutse have confirmed that education is a continuous struggle which can move towards meaningful socio-economic development. On the one hand, at Directorate level, ABE is considered a project that ‘creates an enabling environment’ in which different goals can be achieved depending on what people want. For example, it was indicated that those learners who want to qualify for certification can do so, while those who opt for a different route can freely choose that option as well. On the other, although a framework is created, not all the prospective beneficiaries are able to access that opportunity.

The changed nature of ABE when it became ABET was discussed in the third chapter. It was noted that there was a gradual shift from the political agenda to an economic one – a necessary imperative. The research has highlighted the redefinitions of the aims, purposes and goals of education with such changes. These observations were affirmed in the case study from which contrasting purposes and perceived roles of ABET were different to those articulated by the Director of the Department.

At Moutse learners perceived ABET as a ‘target toward a developed or improved community’. ABET was perceived as a process and not a project. The impression from the Directorate was that the Department has primarily, a fixed agenda, - to

‘create a milieu’, or a project - in which adults can take decisive action in relation to the type of education they want. The result of ABET taking a ‘project’ form, and not a ‘process’ is that it may lessen access to those who wish to enroll and may discourage those totally illiterate if pre-admission selective processes are instituted. Selective access on the basis of set criteria is likely to exclude from ABET adults of an older generation, such as G2 members, who are the majority among rural dwellers in Moutse. Adults can either ‘fit or miss out’ of ‘the defined project’.

It may be suggested that ABET is ambivalent about the need to specifically target women and women’s concerns. It subsumes women’s education and transformation within ‘the need to change society’. Clearly, such projections run contrary to the purpose and nature of established adult education principles which support social justice. Therefore, the present ABET plan, unless reviewed and modified, may continue to leave women on the margins of education, and just a few may be privileged to achieve higher levels of learning.

The decreasing number of registered learners in Table 5.2 illustrates a shift from collective empowerment where men, women and the youth in this area have been involved together in educating one another. It has been noted that this was a period during which they educated themselves to understand the social conditions and political systems operative at the time. The determination to work together was also expressed in their attitude to the adult education programme as a ‘service’ not as a ‘privilege’ or an individual opportunity. Such opinions may suggest that the Moutse learners valued unconditional commitment, full responsibility and an open-ended process in which their services were motivated by their sense ‘of being’ and not by material or other forms of incentives - ‘to have’.

Nonetheless, the notion of ‘service’ in Moutse is contradictory to the projected and scheduled Multi-Year plan wherein the decisions about the content, the value of

learning, the criteria for assessment and standards for qualifications were determined with little consideration for the realities of the learners.

Education for adults seems to be fraught with difficulties resulting from (i) its very nature (ii) the financial and human resources and (iii) its content or format. Each of these factors will be discussed in relation to the how it impacts on women.

The Department of Education, as part of State, is clearly also part of the centralised power-base. This tends to be bureaucratic and detached from most institutions and organisations of society. Although policy direction was determined at the national level, the implementation of the Multi-Year Plan was left to provincial government and local management. One of the reasons for decentralised management was to maintain the principles that promoted flexibility and adaptability in practice. In this way attempts were made for the content of ABET to be more relevant in a variety of contexts. There are merits in the latter decision.

To some extent, it was intended, that the practitioners in each province could adapt the eight Learning Areas to specific learning requirements and perhaps to the needs of the participants. In addition, the adaptation to language needs could be determined on the basis of actual learners and not by potential or projected numbers derived from statistical surveys. In this way, access at the beginner's level was encouraged.

However, such an approach has potential weaknesses. First, context-bound learning areas can be narrow and may limit the scope of learning. The content for ABET may be too localised and issue-focused without expanding into broader perspectives. For instance if, in Mpumalanga, the curriculum modules are oriented more to agricultural and social humanities, mainly taught in Nguni (the dominant language) and if in Northern Cape, a predominantly Afrikaans-speaking province, computer literacy is chosen with handbooks predominantly in another language, the ABET sector would lose its overall coherence. Such plans would work contrary to the principles of transferability and mobility.

In this research it was seen that the two Learning Areas, that is, Communications and Numeracy lessons did not offer much scope for an analytical understanding and integrated learning process. One respondent (L8) who had acquired a Level 3 Communications certificate discovered upon completion that there were no advanced modules for her. Although she valued her improved communication ability, she was not certain how else to improve her education beyond the certificate.

These concerns therefore, also raises questions whether women's issues should be designed as a special Learning Areas or be integrated in the mainstream curriculum.

This is an issue that feminists through various discourses on curricula, continue to debate. Limited or selected knowledge has a number of implications. It may entrap practitioners back to debates about sources of knowledge: who should be involved and who is knowledgeable? At one level it may be so focused and fall short of providing opportunities for critical understanding of wider perspectives, these having an influence on the learner's day-to-day life interactions.

There are no "right formulae" and perhaps the alternative way suggested by Scott (1990) is to look at how relationships of power are constructed. This may be an opportunity to deconstruct notions of masculine universals or feminine specificities. A step forward from exclusive feminism would be the gender-balanced approach. At individual level women at MCLP seem to have adopted the latter approach, although many of their attempts were mainly effective outside the formal learning context. At structural level the staff reported that MCLP is 'creating space' for women through promotions. Yet, men conduct all the Level 3 classes while some of the women facilitators are appointed to manage the administrative duties and teach at Levels 1 and 2. Men are largely instrumental in the dissemination of knowledge. Although dissemination of relevant knowledge and expertise on feminism depends on training, the hierarchy removes women from being influential in what is delivered in the adult education classroom. This is a critical site of learning where women could acquire

broader understanding and critical awareness about how social systems operate, how social relations are established and how power manifests itself within these systems and structures. At a micro level it was seen how the content and approaches adopted by the Numeracy facilitators were also limiting. In addition, they displayed limited understanding of gender equality by their use of patronising examples, choice of words and change of medium of teaching. Such methodologies were thus not likely to enhance the strategies that Moutse women had already begun to apply outside formal lessons.

This implied that as ABE changed its informal nature and its multi-faceted content in which the participants ‘found a site for social interaction’, it lost its multi-purpose dimension. Consequently a number of adults motivated in radical education lost their interest in the narrowly focused content. This was seen in the decreasing number of learners in MCLP. There were different interests and uneven levels of motivation among learners. The drop in numbers also indicated that the content of learning was not of immediate relevance and use, particularly among the (G2) members. The latter also found that their ‘social space’ within which they could exercise their input in addition to acquiring basic literacy, was diminishing. Unless they followed the Learning Areas as designed their social power was lessened. Such factors limited the potential to which meaningful empowerment could be achieved. Unless women were central to the decisions that affected their learning any of the expected changes in the curricula will take long to be effected.

Furthermore, if ABET includes modules exclusive of interest to women in the curriculum, such approaches are likely to encourage the ‘backlash’ from other sectors of the society. It is suggested that one option would be that practitioners develop a balanced perspective. The one in which there is awareness of the philosophy of the African Renaissance which discourages people from defining themselves according to the previous contested racist, sexist and class categories. The women in Moutse, in their multi-disciplinary approach to gender equality, did not allow history to dictate how to change structures and attitudes in the community.

In addition to the nature of ABET some of the limiting constraints are derived from the outcomes-based model and an emphasis on 'outcomes' delivery. This limitation was noted in recent writings for example:

ABET policy has a "deficit" conception of literacy. The move to outcomes based approaches happened without adequate consideration of inputs from those outcomes to be achieved (Kell, 1997:11).

According to Kell the 'deficit' conception is based on an assumption that adult education participants need to be 'filled in' with knowledge, with literacy skills and functional abilities that 'they lack'. In other words, prior knowledge and local everyday knowledge, which she calls 'horizontal knowledge' is discarded but new knowledge, 'vertical knowledge' as defined in the Learning Areas takes precedence. This conceptual shift may account for the two factors prevalent at MCLP. The decreasing number of learners and the promotion systems among staff. If MCLP had continued to build on the knowledge and experiences of its learners and staff, perhaps age would not have been a factor in why some adult learners dropped out.

Furthermore, one might argue that the appointment and promotion of staff should have recognised individual merit and performance so that it was not only male teachers who taught Level 3 while female teachers were assigned to administrative tasks and lower levels of teaching.

Generally, a policy is formulated at a specific point in time, and tends to make sense within its contemporary conditions. The necessity to take account of past historical events can be stifled by this reality and, in the process, some people gain, and others suffer. To some extent, South Africa is faced with the challenge of being seen to prepare to reposition itself for the global as well as national socio-economic agenda.

Projects like MCLP are working within the frameworks where literacy is perceived as a tool for socio-economic construction. Therefore their rationale to change focus is dictated by the ABET policy imperatives.

A number of factors and conditions predetermine how policy processes evolve. (This has been discussed in the previous chapters). Some of the factors are political, others economic or social. It appears that the development of ABE, and the current ABET have had their origins linked to all of these factors.

As a country enters a global arena it requires a skilled and literate workforce driven by a political imperative intertwined with the demand for economic and social transformation. Thus, it is incumbent upon the state to create an education and indeed adult basic education policy which will redress the prevailing conditions. The main initiative built upon the policy to achieve the future vision in ABET is human resource development. Its main feature which seemed to take prominence in the debates on 'new' policies, was intended to integrate education to employment. In the research one found that the overall aims and objectives of MCLP complemented the national ABET aims.

However, the number of learners who completed Level 3 after three years were far fewer than those who had started the programme. A few who completed were unemployed except the five individuals who have started 'home based' businesses. The difficulties still remain for the majority of learners who had no alternative ways of improving their living conditions. Furthermore, Mpumalanga is ranked the seventh of the poorest of the provinces in South Africa. It has 32% of its population with no schooling and 29% with only primary education. It will take substantial financial input and commitment at both national and provincial level to narrow this gap before the people are employable or can be trained in basic skills.

To some extent, one can argue that history repeats itself although its different forms frequently result in similar consequences. In chapters two and three, the ineffectiveness of adult education policies between 1979 and 1986 was discussed. Major reasons given for these failures were that educational policies were, first and foremost, decided on racially discriminating bases. The result of racist divisions was the absence of a coherent national plan that would provide good opportunities and facilities for all people regardless of race, sex and geographical origin. The understanding and declaration of goals in the non-formal sector were ill defined and were also silent about the social conditions of women – these already disadvantaged by legal and cultural practices. Financial resources were not equitably allocated, as they were in the later 1990s. Education funds were thus misused to support law and control programmes in the areas that did not equip learners to be manufacturers and producers, but to remain consumers in thought and in action. In a nutshell, such processes can be termed a “reaction against – response to” phenomenon: a reaction against internal crisis which was responded to pro-actively by mass action.

At the level of learners, the small entrepreneurial initiatives by women could be seen as a ‘reaction’ to the circumstance that they find themselves. The challenges ahead are how ABET can enable these initiatives to be focused beyond the local confines. It remains to be seen how the State will succeed in addressing the inequities in the new period after 1994, in which the single education system has been adopted.

The foregoing paragraphs discussed the nature of ABET and how limiting such a factor may be to the conditions of women in Moutse. Related constraining issues are the government financial inadequacies. These were also found to have a bearing on the positions and women in Moutse.

According to the annual reports almost 90% of the staff at MCLP started in 1989 as volunteers. All but one of the seven facilitators has been with the project for the past nine years although not receiving any salary from the Department of Education. Three

of them were registered for tertiary studies, at their own cost, two in commerce and one in education. These were efforts through which they were attempting to improve their own academic qualifications. The project plan for human resource development was delayed in 1997 because, according to the director, they had not found a sponsor for the computer literacy training. It can therefore be seen that as much as there is low management capacity in the provinces in general, Moutse district, and the MCLP, staff continues to work under difficult conditions.

In addition to lack of technical and management capacity in the provinces, the issues of untrained teachers, low morale, and the status of teaching material had a bearing on the success of putting the ABET plan to work. Mpumalanga is just one of the nine provinces which as recently as 1998/99 has had to deal with mismanagement of funds and administration in the province. Although the matter concerned the formal education sector, it is indicative of the prevailing levels of efficiency and professionalism. The staff at MCLP did not express such difficulties as insurmountable, nonetheless the discussion will show how the all impacts are intertwined and may have a negative force at local levels.

It would appear that just as many African women and individuals from rural areas have been disadvantaged in the past because of racist laws governing education, so history repeats itself in different ways. For example, the percentage of women in non-urban areas of Mpumalanga, according to Table 4.4 (a) as well as Table 4.5, indicate that women have had limited opportunities for schooling. Moreover, because there are limited industries in Moutse, the movement from rural areas to cities (mainly of young men) afforded some men limited opportunities for schooling and employment in urban areas.

The patterns of urban migration still prevail among the family units of the women who were interviewed. Out of the eight interviewees four indicated that they are home managers because for a greater part of the month their husbands work away from

home. The husbands visit the family at monthly or weekly intervals. Yet there seemed to be a greater opportunity for the younger generation to access a second chance to learn.

Typical statements from some of them seemed to confirm this impression:

There were many of us in my family, about 10. So, once you learnt how to write you left school to give way for the younger ones. So I joined because I wanted to improve the standard I acquired. It is difficult though, because when we register we are sent some classes back. I am determined though, because I want to help my husband (L1).

I passed standard five a long time ago. I cannot understand simple words in English or simple expressions on the Television. I started in late June 1994 learning first isiZulu then English and Mathematics. Now I watch the television and can follow' (L2).

The foregoing paragraphs have illustrated that without adequate financial input, national and provincial plans are undermined. The low economic activity in the province leaves families and mainly men no option but to migrate to cities. This leaves women no choice but to sacrifice their educational welfare for domestic priorities and miss out on educational opportunities. Macro forces continue to marginalise women.

At the same time adults may enroll in adult education, but be affected by internal factors of curriculum design. There are many limitations in the OBE model, these are influenced by the assumptions that underlie the model, assumptions that integration of education and training can serve the goals for a growing economy. Since the time of its adoption, numerous critiques of OBE have been written (Jansen, 1997; Breir, 1998; Kruss and Donn, 1998; Meerkotter, 1998). OBE as an alternative model oriented towards 'the learner's performance' is considered to be better than the teacher-focused programmes of the past. In this model, there is more emphasis on acquiring skills, knowledge and understanding. It presupposes that those who go

through the curriculum will be better prepared to fit into the demands of the changing economy. It will thus encourage and improve the performance of learners through 'active participation' and learners will display their understanding through 'deliverables' or 'outcomes'.

However, the research in Moutse has confirmed that the change from informal nature to the formal adult education programme has affected processes of learning and learner input. Although once each year learners are invited to make suggestions about how the programme can be improved during Learner's Day, it did not appear that any of the daily lessons could be adapted. In each of the observed lessons, none of the learners was asked for suggestions or alterations to the lesson plans. The facilitators were following the Guides from the National Department. In one Mathematics lesson, a Level 4 formal education prescribed book was used instead of Level 3 material. It appeared that the policy guides were incorrectly perceived as a 'blue-print' of what needs to be done. They may therefore be quite disempowering.

Because OBE is intended to be a learner-centred model, it is assumed that perceptions of learners will change because they are directly involved in the process of acquiring knowledge. Most of these assumptions, discussed broadly in chapter four, were seen to be the major limitations to which Meerkotter strongly objected. His opinion was that ABET will 'certainly not change what is happening in the classroom, as it follows a curriculum which is retrogressive, more technicist and mechanistic' (Meerkotter 1998:56). Indeed in the classes of this study, the two Learning Areas were limiting the scope of teaching and learning. The strict adherence to the two areas were indicative of the narrow conception of the 'new' adult education. The failure among the facilitators to reflect on 'people's history' to use examples relevant to the 'learner's environments' and learner's context was not helpful. When facilitators attempted to use examples they were patronising as they led learners to associate domestic environments as the forte for women.

Changes in any curriculum and the success of its implementation relate to the external dynamics or environmental factors in which practitioners find themselves. OBE was introduced in 1998 two years after the restructuring of the teaching profession was announced. It was a period during which the general morale of teachers in the country had been affected by the uncertainties about their future careers. The OBE model was to be piloted in formal schools at the beginning of the same year. A number of teachers, not so qualified in the model specifications, were apprehensive about the downsizing proposals for teaching staff. Teachers on contract would be the first to leave the profession. Others could face redeployment to areas far from home without consultation about personal choices. In addition options remained made open for redundant teachers to find refuge in ABET. The morale in the school decreased and the culture of learning was at its lowest ebb, thus spilling over into ABET. This meant that chances of ABET practitioners ever receiving a salary from the Department of Education were unlikely as this sector depended and survived on private sector contribution and foreign funding.

Yet, at the same period, the ABET directorate was setting up a national training programme, using the Cascade Model, to train in the first stage nine adult educator trainers in the 'new' adult education methodologies. Each of the national trainers would be responsible for passing on the methodology at provincial levels by each training nine practitioners. Implicit in the national teacher in-service programme was the suggestion that the adult educators would make a real paradigm shift from the 'old' thinking to the 'new' Curriculum 2005. While some welcomed the training, questions remained about incentives. At the time of the research – 1998, none of the MCLP facilitators were trained in the new methodologies.

There was a general sense among teachers and ABET practitioners specifically that they were being tossed around as 'pawns on a chessboard'. Their resilience as professional practitioners was put to test. In the mean time they were preoccupied with certification issues, content of the learning areas, but much less about the purpose of education and how to teach critical learning. Teachers felt disenfranchised

by the threat of redeployment. Delays in the programme on the Culture of Learning²⁵ increased the 'restlessness' in the teaching fraternity.

The propositions for re-deploying formal school teachers caused tensions as practitioners in ABET were reluctant to be joined by teachers trained in the old formal education system. Teaching as a career faced a period of despair and the overlap with ABET left the facilitators feeling helpless. One of the facilitators from MCLP (S2) expressed helplessness by wanting to wait for directives from the national office.

The declining morale in the education sector as well as the demands for retraining and preparation for OBE had a negative effect on education generally. It is anticipated that these would be similar for adult education practitioners. After two years, it is not surprising that the assessment of the OBE pilot phase, by Potenza, was summarised as follows:

Grade 1 and 2 have been implemented in a patchy way in many schools. Training of teachers (in OBE) has been inadequate, as has the supply of learning material. There is a concern that the new curriculum is distracting teachers from teaching basic reading and writing skills (Potenza, 1999:1).

The above comment and factors discussed earlier illustrate the difficulties in the implementation of OBE as they point to the relationship between financial input, training qualifications and lack of understanding of the new methodology. However, problems in the implementation are not separate from the way the Curriculum 2005 was conceptualised in the first place. The assumptions which were addressed in the fourth chapter, the weaknesses of 'importing' and 'adapting' foreign policies not so

²⁵ Culture of Learning is a programme that was launched in 1998 by the Minister of Education to instill a new commitment to education among teachers and students.

relevant for the South African context, and the political swing to a capitalist-oriented framework compounded the problems in practice.

This scenario illustrates how the Department of Education exerts its political authority by introducing a model in which implementers had little input. It is a packaged model which national and provincial departments must implement. The magnitude of this problem has led the current Minister of Education to review OBE by commissioning evaluation teams. In 1999, the Human Science Research Council undertook an evaluation of Curriculum 2005 in 400 schools. The findings of the HSRC were tabled for discussion at a consultative forum in February 2000. Out of the deliberations, a Review Committee was mandated to conduct further investigations and an evaluation of OBE. A report was compiled with recommendations which were presented to the education Minister on the 31 May 2000.

It has been argued in the “C2005 21st Century Report” that although there is support for the principles of OBE the difficulties with implementation were confounded by:

- A skewed curriculum structure and design
- Lack of alignment between curriculum and assessment policy
- Inadequate orientation, training and development of teachers
- Learning support materials that are variable in quality, often unavailable and not sufficiently used in classrooms
- Policy overload and limited transfer of learning into classrooms
- Shortages of personnel and resources to implement and support C2005
- Inadequate recognition of curriculum as the core business of education departments (Chisholm et al., 2000:10).

Prior to the findings of the Review Committee a number of concerns about the curriculum and the OBE model had been debated widely in the academic circles. Among these were the complex principles around – “adaptability, flexibility and assessment of prior learning” particularly for adult learners as well as at further education levels. If for example the defined OBE model is to be adapted, on what criteria would these adaptations be made if the model has not been put to the test? To

what extent can practitioners be flexible in adapting the content of the curricula? How and what measures do educators apply to assess prior learning? These and many other questions are not easy to resolve at both conceptual and practical levels.

It could thus be seen that most of the limitations listed in the C2005 report were a reflective summary of unresolved issues raised in this chapter as well as in chapter three. The C2005 Review Committee forwarded proposals for:

- The revision of the Curriculum 2005 structure which will include reorientation of teachers, improved learning support material and re-organisation of curriculum structure and functions at national, provincial and within departments.
- Learning areas to be reduced from eight to six, with more emphasis on mathematics and languages;
- Statements of Intent to be declared for Early Childhood, Further Education and Training, Adult Basic Education and Training and General Education and Training programmes;
- The conceptual framework for outcomes and what Learning Areas are to be articulated and integrated once they are understood;
- Education should support values that promote social justice, equity and an aim to develop critical individuals (Chisholm et al., 2000:12).

The findings about teacher qualifications resonate with the findings at MCLP. All the facilitators in MCLP lacked technical expertise in curriculum development and assessment methods. They were just beginning to work through some of the complex concepts and terminology in OBE while at the same time awaiting the delivery of teaching material and language textbooks from the national office of the Department of Education. In this way they were in danger of adopting a 'dependency culture'. Instead of building on their own creativity they tended to look to the ABET Directorate for guidance. In this way, their spontaneity and imaginative strategic abilities seem to have been hampered by increasing dependency.

Related to 'dependency culture' were problems caused by lack of programmes and delays in training the teachers, lack of financial resources and the complexity of the

standard-setting processes in which the Standard Generating Bodies²⁶ must apply about 66 criteria. Teachers were expected to learn and comprehend how to apply the assessment standards. Various sectors, like manufacturing, agriculture, cottage industry and artisans would each have to define and get approval of their assessment criteria from the South African Qualifications Authority. The apprehensions were that SGBs would focus on the skill component for employability with limited ways of integrating 'prior learning'. In this way they could marginalise women and the unemployed.

The processes of setting standards is a contested area. The Department of Education is determined to support a mission for lifelong learning, the SGBs place emphasis on standards for certification, and ABET practitioners like those from MCLP are primarily concerned about transformation and development. Each of these institutions regards their individual overall goal as important, and hence prioritise each goal as of great value. Although holistically stakeholders can contribute in different ways to a transformed South Africa as envisaged in the ABET vision, the type of knowledge offered is predetermined. It is, as already said, allowing the economic machinery to dictate 'useful knowledge'. This process confirms the bureaucratic and technical tendency inherent in the OBE model.

The principle of prior learning is another controversial aspect of OBE. In 1998, Breier provided insightful research into prior learning by pointing out that by recognising previous experiences it should not be assumed that whatever adults bring into the 'formal' mode of learning would be equivalent to what they will require for assessment. It is a process which demands more than an interrogation of the

²⁶ Standard Generating Body is a registered body in terms of section 5(1)(a)(ii) of the SAQA Act. It is responsible for establishing education and training standards or qualifications, and to which specific functions relating to the establishment of national standards and qualifications have been assigned in terms of section 5(1)(b)(I) of the SAQA Act.

curriculum. Assessment of prior learning necessitates an epistemology that goes beyond the content, methods and outcomes. It should endeavor to be sensitive to the history and cultural values of any society. The political and social history of Moutse has caused adults to pass through different educational systems. Assessing prior learning among adults in Moutse is a formidable task.

For example, in the case of the women of Moutse, assessment of general knowledge would require individualised and specialised standards for each learner. If Moutse people were to be subjected to the new ABET assessment criteria, the difficulty would be how to interpret the types of knowledge and degrees of empowerment that they acquired during the political struggle. Ideally, each learner would have individualistic experiences and varied understandings of those experiences, different degrees of involvement, and their analysis of the victories (and failures) and the significant roles that women have been involved in, would require a multi-faceted set of indicators.

Assessment might have to include a process of investigating their past and present learning, and an adoption of a new sociological understanding of where they came from, why they were there and where they want to be, as well as how they want to get there. If a sociological analysis were applied, it would require a move from the protocols of OBE and Curriculum 2005, to address major questions of how, in addition to acquiring literacy, functional and technical skills, women could better defend their world through education.

Given that ABET is also now designed within the 'new' OBE framework, how, then, does this relate to the case analysis for women in Moutse? A few factors will be analysed in answering the question and these are:

- The nature of the curriculum;
- Perceptions about gender equality;
- The perceptions held by women of emancipation and
- how women have exercised their power.

The figures in the MCLP annual reports show that the number of learners has been decreasing in the years 1994 to 1998. The main reason given for declining numbers t as already discussed in chapter six, was the lack of immediate relevance of the curriculum to the living conditions and aspirations of the people, particularly the elderly generation. Although there was a high number who qualified in the external examinations in Levels 1 and 2, in 1996, a very small number managed to continue to write Level 3 during the same period.

The 'new' ABET programme specifies the eight Learning Areas to be taught. The assessment includes outcomes by which learners must illustrate their understanding by performing tasks in accordance with set criteria. In other words, knowledge is indirectly defined, its utility and applicability equally predetermined. It is given that the 'new' plan not only suggests the Learning Areas, but also manages how the knowledge is transmitted. The difference in this 'new' programme is that during the 1980s members of organisations could suggest what to learn (environmental issues, health, politics). They also determined the processes (voluntary, relevance) for engaging in adult education, but with the 'new' ABET learner input is implied but not practiced. ABET has assumed a professional, much more formal format in content and delivery.

An exploration of the 'inside influence' in the case study may provide some insights into why real emancipation, albeit limited, has been further circumscribed. From the findings about Moutse women, empowerment began to be effective at individual level but spread through groups whose aim was to develop better citizenship. It was an empowering process at a personal level, but its effectiveness diminished when the energies were channeled and contained in systematic and structured programmes of learning. Examples of learners (L1, L2, L4, L5, L7 and Fm1) illustrate how individual energies were used to change personal and family circumstances and to contribute positively to their community. Women could use their group's collective power to change the minds and attitudes of men, and effect changes in their community structures. Their role fitted into the broader phenomena already defined in the

literature as politically progressive forms of feminism (Small and Kompe, 1991; Bernstein, 1992; Meer, 1997; Taylor 1997).

Notwithstanding the achievements, there may be weaknesses in this form of emancipation in that it is localised and thus may fall short of permeating macro structures at a national or international level. Changes in society occur with a number of dynamics. The structure of any society, be it a class or caste system, classifies people into strata which generate unequal relations between those who have and those who do not. Often, each of these classes acquire new interests, new concerns specific to their class levels and result in a disintegrating force. Subsequently there is an adoption of individualistic interests. Commonly, class divisions are easily identifiable, particularly in urban areas as the middle classes are formed, while rural dwellers seem to remain marginalised in poor living circumstances. As interests get defined by class divisions, the question therefore is to what extent are 'localised' efforts such as those displayed by Moutse learners sustained?

It appeared that the unequal and under-resourced conditions in Moutse did not know any gender boundaries; both men and women remained poor from the period when Afrikaner farmers appropriated their land. Over decades, the systems of rule changed from Afrikaner to British, to independent white government and lastly, to the Nationalist apartheid system from whence was instituted the separate development homeland policies. Both racism and patriarchy resulted in women being dependent on men, Africans on whites. Because of racial discrimination the majority of the population remained poor and with low literacy. If social stratification were determined by educational achievements, people in the rural areas would not qualify for any of the educated categories as most people had no opportunity for real education or economic advancement.

Perhaps the factor of being a poorly educated community, as articulated by the facilitators (S1, S3, S4, Fm2), was the driving force which made people work toward

a shared goal. People in rural areas, like Moutse, bonded together more easily and voluntarily, because they shared similar traditions, communal practices and political difficulties described in the previous chapters. The dichotomy between those who had and those who did not have was not displayed. The young achievers used their limited educational achievements as a starting point to help illiterate adults. In many families, it did not matter whether there was a man of the house as the breadwinner. In fact, families did not have to depend on what the man would bring in but had to find ways of surviving from among themselves. The sense of self worth, displayed by the interviewees (L7, L4, L5, and L1), inculcated a spirit of independence from men. Hence, when women were faced with the challenges of meeting their material needs, they did so on their own terms, protecting their own autonomy and working hard for improved and better living conditions.

The findings suggest therefore that women need to understand that their emancipation does lie in discovering how power manifests itself beyond themselves, what alliances are dominant and how to penetrate these alliances (Mayo, 1997). Such an approach makes the women's movement both a political and a social force through which women challenge not only the character of male power, but also amass strategies to resist or change it. An interesting perspective can be drawn out of the findings of the research. Instead of adapting to the existing patterns suggested by radical and socialist feminists who consider women as 'victims' of capitalism and patriarchy (Barr, 1999), in this case, women adopted innovative and inter-disciplinary patterns of empowerment. They adopted strategies in which men were made to understand and appreciate the humanity of being, and to recognise that the potential and evident abilities of women could be manifested for the good of all. Moutse women thus integrated formal and informal tools like dance, theatre, and discussions at meetings, talk shows and all that was available to redress the gender balance.

They did not wait for secondary or alternative forces of change from somewhere outside themselves, such as from the mindset expressed by the Human Resource Manager who, in relation to gender plans said that they were:

.... awaiting the directive of the Board or the National Department. [In the mean time] women used their own capacities and shared abilities to promote, encourage and to build a community that would benefit from transformed gender practices (S2).

It can be concluded that the women from MCLP have adopted an attitude in which they endeavored to transform gender relations as recognised by (S2) above. Their unique approach was underpinned by the principle that they 'are not anti-men'. They invited men to participate as 'partners' in the development agenda. They intended 'to reeducate men' about origins of gender inequality by simultaneously forging collective alliances to build bridges and to be of influence so that changes in the community benefited everyone. As the women empowered themselves, their strategy seemed to create what may be perceived as an alliance working within hard attitudes of rural male-dominated structures.

The inter-disciplinary approach that the interviewees (G1, Fm2) adopted illustrated the different conceptions of gender equality held by men (F1, F2, S2). For them gender equality can be subsumed under Human Rights and is not worthy of being accorded any importance. Such an attitude according to Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) is a patronising generalist conception of gender which can be manipulated as it does not recognise women as equals. It was seen in the interviews that with such an approach, some of the men in MCLP suggested that they 'want to help', and 'to advise' as if women were not capable by themselves. In the interviews, the male facilitators (F2, F4) said that women 'must be given space' by men. The 'maleness' gives them an advantage to lead with ideas even if they are less experienced.

Such distorted abilities of the self were demonstrated in the Mathematics lessons where it was noted that two of the numeracy teachers did not handle the learner's questions very well; they failed to communicate the aims of the lessons well and also used language in a patronising manner. All lessons at Level 3 were supposed to be taught in English. If the facilitators had been conversant with the language and the content of the lessons, change into a local language would not have been necessary.

The change from English to isiZulu did not make the lesson more comprehensible. In addition the facilitators tended to use 'sexist' examples that were inappropriate. Furthermore, facilitators used leading questions with sexist examples.

The male facilitators, therefore, fulfilled the 'male-senior' and 'female-support' roles typical of existing social practices, including those in education - a phenomenon labelled 'differential participation' (Kaufman, 1997). Differential participation is a process in which women, in the main, may seem as if they are empowered, or to be on their way to overcoming the structural inequalities and yet men are privileged to fulfil their 'male-senior' roles. At the same time women's actions can be ineffective, a problem compounded by the need among men to want to control and dominate. The inappropriateness of language as in the classes observed, was both an attitudinal problem whose 'source lies in the hegemonic definitions of power that exists in a patriarchal society' (Kaufman, 1997:153).

MCLP has attempted to address gender by promoting women to positions of higher decision making and management responsibilities. Two of the women founder members were promoted to co-ordinate the learning centres. They displayed leadership capacities when in 1996 and 1998 the learner performances improved during the external examinations. However, they continued to teach the Levels 1 and 2 regardless of the expertise and experience gathered since the inception of the project. Thus, the mere promotion into management portfolios did not guarantee or indicate determination to address gender inequalities. Their positions and potential ability to influence decisions, were hampered by the underlying assumptions governing societal practices. An increase in female facilitators in Level 3 by itself does not necessarily change the culture of organisations. Even if more women were to be appointed as Level 3 teachers that act would not necessarily change the culture of the organisation. Therefore, the challenge still continues on how change the male domineering cultures in organisations. To find alternate ways if a gendered morality within social structures (formal and informal), in which a just and equitable system are to be achieved.

The experiences and role of women in Moutse indicate that the origins of their education began in the liberation struggle. Over and above the politics of liberation, one of the greatest achievements emerging from the difficulties in Moutse in 1986 related to land issues. Land ownership is one among the many Rights that women demanded through the Women's Charter in 1990 after their land victories: (i) that women participate at local and national levels of governance, (ii) that there be a quota for future representation, especially the one endorsed by the ANC, (iii) that priorities of women be fully addressed, and finally (iv) that women continue to organise themselves (Women's National Coalition, 1990; Small and Kompe, 1991).

The outcome of the Coalition was that, in 1994, the political leadership was constituted in the South African parliament with a relatively high proportion of women, considering the political and patriarchal background of its history. South Africa therefore compared favourably with developing countries with 13% of women representation in political leadership. When compared with developed countries, which in the same year were at 17%, South Africa had a 29% representation of women in political leadership (UN Development Census, 1995). Within a period of five years, this composition has improved. There are now eight women ministers and eight deputy ministers, in the Executive Council of forty members, almost 40% overall. Although the interviewees could not stipulate the percentage representation of women in politics in 1998, they could name the women ministers and give their portfolios. One of the achievements associated with women's leadership was mentioned by (L6 and L7) when they recognised that the women in their village were only recently able to own a home as single mothers.

Most importantly, women in Moutse identified and recognised themselves in these achievements. It was noted during the focus group discussions that the women saw their contributions in attaining women's representation in politics not as a factor of individuality but as an outcome of broader participation. In their understanding, education seems to remain integrated with the social as well as political emancipation

as it was in the 1980s. The fact that the ministries of land and health were led by women Ministers was for them a consolidation of their contributions in the political struggle. One of the G2 members said that through Voter Education, their participation had helped maKompe to secure a seat in parliament. In support of the opinion, two other respondents (S3, L7) met their Member of Parliament at a constituency rally held at a public podium in 1997 (a venue not far from their villages). They expressed assurance that such a follow-up with their representative indicated that maKompe is a leader who remains in alliance with the people who elected her.

They referred to maKompe as '*ummeli oqotho*' an 'accountable representative'. They could identify with the political leaders that represented them because they knew the type of women leaders that they elected had social backgrounds similar to theirs. Some had limited academic training, yet from political experience they were equipped to represent the desires of the 'voiceless' rural community. As architects outside parliamentary structures, Moutse women think they still 'have a voice' and mechanisms to monitor and judge the performance of their leaders. It can be concluded that the community campaigns, whether through Voter Education or Adult Education were both a 'method' of change and a 'goal' that came with political and social change. Through these methods women created a voice for themselves and amassed organisational capacity nation-wide. They continued to pursue the similar goals in their local structures.

Other national structures in South Africa which support gender and human rights are the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE), the Women's Desk, the Equity Bill of Rights and the Human Rights Commission. Although some of the staff and learners were aware of the listed structures, in particular (L7), referred to the CGE and its functions, it is yet to be seen how each of the structures could make inroads to influence the ABET curriculum.

Notwithstanding all these supportive structures, Moutse learners are in a district dominated by patriarchy. Power in many rural societies, as in some Moutse villages (Weldevrede, Ntwane), is thrust on men. Further, traditions and customs afford men the advantage in the villages at '*kgotla*', the 'royal kraal', where men control the affairs of the family as well as of the community, and with local Chiefs who have the sole administrative power over land rights. The research studies conducted in the Northern province indicated how land rights in rural communities were linked to political and economic power. Women, therefore, for a long period, understood the 'local power' as the domain of men and thus commanded less authority in the village areas (Small, 1994). Nonetheless, this reality is beginning to be challenged by women (Fm1, G2) as they mobilise their community, but particularly as they put pressure on men to revisit issues around land rights, land ownership and gender equality. It can be suggested that women wanted first, to highlight the discriminatory systems against women in a local context before pursuing national structures.

The question, therefore, is, how can Moutse women transcend their 'local context' to break through as radical agents? Understanding power has much to do not only with knowing where it is located, but also with how it functions, how the alliances work and how to challenge or reject the repercussions of power play (Inglis 1997; Mayo, 1997). It was shown in the case study, that, at local level, the women displayed an understanding of power from within themselves. They also came to discover through informal education that societal systems and practices have bestowed more authority on men. A mere degree of understanding is an emancipatory process. Out of this consciousness, the women in Moutse have recognised their individual and group power. Whatever 'really useful knowledge' they have acquired in the process such knowledge about land rights, about voting rights, about relationships among people and why men continue to enjoy privileged status, they want to use to improve lives at home and in their community. Their moral ideals are unconditional but purposeful for the sake of others. They have brought with them 'prior experience and abilities' with which they enter into the world of literacy.

Among the learners, all but one of the interviewees in G1 are married, they live with children and relatives and are not employed in any 'formal' job. In addition, five of them have begun in entrepreneurial ways to contribute to the economic welfare of their families through the home businesses they have initiated. For those who started small businesses (L1, L4, L5, L6 and L7), their efforts were expressed as 'a complementary activity to help my husband', 'improving social conditions in the community'. Familial and communal responsibility seemed important, and because they were not 'formally' employed, their choices were limited to 'informal home-based' business options. As much as they wished for themselves and for their children to be educated, two learners (L4, L7) each devised a rota system that allowed each of their family members to relieve the other to allow time for afternoon adult classes. L4 took care of the grandchild while her daughter attended school in the morning. Her turn to attend adult classes was in the afternoon. L7 exchanged roles with her two sons, each responsible for selling at the 'tuck shop' on alternate afternoons.

It was notable from the community events (Graduation, Learner's day and a funeral) and from the findings, that Moutse women did not allow the societal stereotype to determine their roles in society. At each of the events, learners who were no longer registered took part in the programmes as part of the planning team while others participated in all but the Learner's Day workshop. During the interviews, each of the six women expressed the determination to take a lead in whatever way they were able, whether in the home or outside the home in community structures or political participation:

My ultimate dream is to be a social worker; this village (Ntwane) is very slow on development (L7).

If I can create employment for at least twenty six unemployed people from my neighbourhood ... (L1)

Development is about getting involved, but we want the young men in Moutse to fight in the same way as they did for the ANC ... (Fm1),

One could suggest that experience and involvement in previous community structures during the liberation struggle were not determined on the basis of femininity or masculinity, but because of their determination to achieve social justice.

But why would women adopt what seemed to be an accommodative approach when they were dealing with community structures hostile to gender equality? Because in reality this was a positive assertive way of getting change as was illustrated from the interviews. These women were assertive and tended to rely on themselves as persons (L1, L2, and L7). They referred to concepts like '*izidingo*'; 'one's desires' or 'determination'; *umuntu onesifiso*'; recognising one's special abilities; or finding one's potential'. The political experiences of women in rural communities and determination to fight for what was rightfully theirs - land, and later their participation toward full democracy made them reclaim their sense of identity and individuality as a community.

One reading of the research findings seems to suggest that women's emancipation in Moutse included aspects of the liberal, socialist and radical feminism, each with limitations. Liberal theorists, for example, associate women's conditions, be they achievements or failures, with their natural differences to men. The traditional belief that men are by nature dominant and women are dependent on them predetermines the roles of each sex. According to this view the biological differences between men and women determine the ways that each individuals assert themselves. Therefore, women were socialised to accept that they are an inferior species and that men are superior and capable. As the liberal theory developed, 'innate inability' was disputed in the women's movement. Feminists pointed out that lack of opportunities for women had contributed to their alleged inferiority. They advocated equal opportunities for all. For example, if governments were to legislate for equality between men and women in all sectors including education, they believed women would take charge alongside men. Their assumptions were that if financial resources were available, access should be open to everyone and individuals should have unlimited opportunities for education.

If the logic of liberal feminists were to be juxtaposed with the situation in Moutse, it would have major weaknesses. First because women had no resources, they were discriminated against, divided and excluded, geographically and racially. Nonetheless, with limited material resources and will power, they made a concerted effort, in collaboration with the youth, first to change the political system, then to address literacy problems. Secondly, educational resources for farm workers and village dwellers were not available, nor were they easily accessible. But many of the adults it could be suggested derived their foundation from the informal education during the liberation struggle. Conditions only slightly improved with the 1994 democracy. Perhaps a liberal framework can be found in 'education for all' as declared in the Constitution and in the ABET Policy. ABET has created an avenue in which there is room for those who can acquire certification and undertake personal development. Individuals like L3, L1, L6 were able to find an opportunity because they already had a sense of self that empowered them to realise that they could change their own world(s).

Socialist feminists, on the one hand, consider women as 'victims' of capitalism and patriarchy (Barr, 1999). Consequently, the subordinate role of women in family life is most significant under the capitalist system as it accords men power over women because men are expected to be the breadwinners. Radical feminists, on the other hand, concentrate on power relations and how to critically understand the location of power relationships created within structures of society, between and among men and women, and also how power is used or abused. If a psychoanalytic aspect of empowerment is considered in the manner advocated by liberal feminists, it would fall short of challenging structural aspects. At an individual or private level, one can speak of an empowered person; however, private efforts, unless fully mobilised, may fail to change power and gender relations in the public arena. Although some of the Moutse learners have brought with them experiences from their 'informal' liberation education, their assertiveness is overpowered by the very nature of how bureaucratic educational institutions operate. The weakness of this approach is that it fails to have

an impact beyond the individual self and yet it projects the traditional collective ethics characteristic of rural communities.

Regardless of the slow impact within national structures, Moutse women have opened a dialogue with men not only because they consider them as their equals, but mainly because they are aware and convinced of their own capabilities. Their capabilities were not defined by physiological or biological perspectives, neither did they allow a social definition - gender - to predetermine what and how they were to develop themselves as well as their community. It seems that they have used a reflective process of drawing strength from the historical successes that reaffirmed their confidence, and thus re-built their self-esteem. Their conception of equality was not expressed literally, but implicitly as '*ubungani*' 'sameness'.

In colloquial usage the word '*ubungani*' could mean a 'friend or an acquaintance'. But in a cultural context, '*ubungani*', is a revered word which means 'of my own kind' or 'my better half' expressed not in biological terms but in a humane and spiritual sense of identity Burke (1999). The women's approach thus promoted 'co-partnership' in the process of building community structures. Co-partnership suggests a collaborative engagement. It supports equity, good will and harmony all virtues which characterise the essence of the African Renaissance discussed in the first chapter. Women used their established and natural alliances to educate and re-educate men that leadership and representation by women equals ability, credibility, concrete action, respect and the ability to deliver what has been promised.

Although the women in the sample expressed some awareness about gender equality, and were also aware of the national and local structures that challenged inequalities, their actions were not confined to what may be considered as a 'woman's/feminist course of action. Women managed, controlled, directed and have been influential in decisions about how to improve old and new structures in Moutse. They have demanded, for example, a 60% men and 40% women representation in the

Community Resource and Development Committee. Perhaps that was a localised social pattern in pursuit of building better families and a happier community, with structures in which the representation would include women. However, it can be concluded, that in their local plans for a transformed community, they sought to break the dominance of men. Their (L1, Fm1, L5, L7) programmes included men in one form or another except during their strategic meetings or what they called 'caucus sessions'. Two of the interviewees had not heard of feminist actions (by specific women's organisations) although almost all the project members were part 'of the processes of formulating new patterns of how women can be empowered' (Fm1, Fm3) but also how men learn about gender equality.

Conclusion

The preceding paragraphs show that the nature of empowerment through adult education among Moutse learners, acquired as far back as the 1980s was an 'inside out' approach. The groups were indigenous, loosely structured and not orchestrated from outside. The findings support the literature on general education and on grass-root participation in the earlier chapters whereby participation included the youth, the old, women and men and began with close and very localised issues (Walters, 1987; Lodge et al. 1992; and Taylor, V 1997). Through this form of participation, knowledge was acquired. Informally, the people equipped themselves with relevant and 'really useful knowledge' as a tool to challenge socio-political injustices.

In order to extend the acquired political power, functional and literacy skills have indeed, become necessary. The project Director described the role of adult basic education, as a means to improve literacy as well as economic development.

The findings have shown that there is a gap between policy pronouncements and the reality in which women in this case study found themselves; that the ABET policy is a broad statement of intent, but a limited tool with regard to learners realising full emancipation.

The Masifundisane project was just such a manifestation of what had been characteristic of this community – radicalism and the struggle for justice. In it were women whose resilience was shaped by the social, political and economic conditions that prevailed in Moutse long before the ‘new’ education system was introduced.

The research has also shown that women have used lessons and experiences of their traditional mores to define their approaches to gender equality. In other words, they declared the kind of community they wanted, the one they aspired to, a community in which neither men nor women rule by themselves, or work independently of each other, but one in which there is collaboration and co-operation. Women have decided that they will not correct the wrongs of the past South African history – ‘separate and divisive’ - with another wrong.

If these findings demonstrate anything, it is that women do not desire to work away from the young generations and separate from men. It would appear that they are re-creating a collaborative consciousness built on a cultural fibre that begins with the family and extends to group and communal values. If a co-operative consensus is achieved, it may lay the foundation for national harmony and freedom. As Mazrui (1990) notes, a culture underpins the basis on which actions emerge. Collective responsibility is an integral part of the African culture. But institutions in society, education being one of them, have different and contrasting ‘cultures’ and ideologies, within which ABET is being implemented. These cultures and ideologies continue to be contested matters in education in which the demands for women’s emancipation intensify. The research has also shown that unless a meaningful transformative curriculum is developed in ABET, women’s energies might be directed to mere ‘reactive’ and not a ‘pro-active’ force. A transformative curriculum would be the one that does not marginalise cultural and traditional knowledge, one in which learners can acquire a balanced understanding of powers both within themselves and beyond themselves.

Chapter Eight

Summary and Conclusions

In the introductory section of the thesis, it was indicated the aim of the study is to research the complexities of 'women re-defining themselves and their own world' in the context of adult education in the changing South Africa. The importance of new definition has been seen to be pertinent within the current debates in South Africa. This is particularly so since the single system of education was adopted in 1995 introducing, with it, the 'new' adult basic education and training programme in October 1997. The research was an exploratory study based on a reading of history reflected upon in an understanding of the impact of political and educational change on women. The political changes led to the introduction of an philosophical theme of the African Renaissance, - a demand for South Africa to shed the effects of past racist ideologies and to adopt a unifying, non-sexist and non-racist education.

As a prelude to the research, there were two points of inquiry; firstly, the aim was to investigate the political character of the 'people's movement' during the period 1979 to 1999. It was also to examine whether the evolution of adult education was uniquely characteristic of the South African situation. Secondly, the aim was to find out whether the changes from a racist and divisive background against which the early political and educational changes were made, had created an opportunity in which to re-write, re-define, and re-discover ways of approaching gender in adult basic education.

The aim of the research was in part, to examine how adult basic education in the past and in its current ABET form has been conceptualised and to analyse the processes of its implementation. Further, it became important to discuss how ABET was perceived

by a group of women, and whether there was any opportunity through which these women could reflect upon the effects and meanings of their learning experiences in ABET programmes to transform their lives. The crucial factors in this research have been to delineate the role of adult basic education in the development of post-apartheid South Africa and to decipher the position of ABET programmes as now perceived by a sample of women from a rural community.

First, the research recognised that social change has been driven by a variety of ideological, cultural and economic forces, all of which have had a determining effect on the purpose and nature of adult basic education. Second, these forces have been seen to be competitive. Their competing effects have been influential in how education is structured, and it is argued that these make the latter a contested and controversial arena.

This study has provided an understanding why ABET is a contested field, what the factors are that determine its nature, its purpose and its content. From this understanding, a related aim has been to delineate any optimism felt by a group of women for women's empowerment and emancipation. This has been a particularly profound issue given the new context within which ABET now operates. It is a context that demands for economic reconstruction and transformation, a call for African redefinition of nationhood and preparation for global competitiveness.

The study has explored a theoretical discourse about educating adults. It has also provided new insights into how gender can be promoted in a constructive manner both in formal and informal adult education contexts. It has been the aim to indicate ways in which ABET can help social relations in society.

Main Findings

The findings confirm that the field of adult education is problematic. It is also political, as is characteristic of women's movements. First, the socio-political events and economic conditions over the period under study have been found to be important in the development of adult education. In South Africa, a specific form of political history of conflicts and negotiations has been pivotal in shaping education and educational policies. It has been a history that was characterised by racial and sexual discrimination which began far earlier than the twenty year period which has been the focus of this study. The women's movements in South Africa have also been shaped largely by socio-political and economic inequities. However outwith the same issues, the South African feminism gathered a basis to empower and work toward transforming gender relations. Women began by using the informal educational structures to make their voices heard.

It has been illustrated that women learned from the same political experiences to define their strategies through educating one another on how to change their conditions and positions in society. Throughout the period of the 1970s and 1980s some researchers noted that 'Black women dismissed the Western-based feminism they heard and read about' (Kemp et al, 1995:141). They reflected on their oppressive political history, analysed the conditions and positions in which they found themselves, discussed the implications of these subservient positions to men and within the systems of power sought ways of liberating both women individually and collectively as well as men in their community.

However, throughout the twenty years under review, issues of race, economics, culture, ideologies and gender have had a great influence in determining the second factor - namely, the processes and nature of consultations that inform policy making.

In other words there was an alliance of power between race, economics, culture ideology and gender that marginalised women. Instead of tackling each of the issues separately, it has been shown how women have strategically adopted national collective forces through the Women's National Coalition (addressing race and gender) and the Rural Women's Movement (addressing class, race, culture and gender). Within these movements they have also used a coalition to face conflicting interests even among themselves.

At a local level, it was seen how an activist maKompe, the voice of the rural women's movement, a mentor to the youth and the local women of Moutse transcended 'from the local' to the national through her exemplary roles. Indeed, she was a symbol of empowerment in which at an individual or personal level she was able to achieve her goals. But the construction of empowerment in this research was not 'power over' others in which one individual exercises her prerogatives over others. Various writers have explained that 'power over' is manifest when 'a group of people are systematically denied power and influence in the dominant society ...' (Rowlands, 1998:12). The Moutse women have shown a process wherein 'power with' and 'power within' individuals or groups can be successful to change structural and attitudinal relations in a society. Therefore women's emancipation '*inguquko yomphakathi*' is both an instrumentalist and developmentalist approach to real social change.

Moutse women do not perceive themselves 'anti men'. Neither did they a strategy that endorsed 'power over' lest they be seen threatening. Instead their interdisciplinary approach was a process of emancipating both men and women. Men came to realise in the first place that although patriarchy afforded them first rights to land, and apartheid men and women racially, neither men nor women were empowered throughout the past history. They could own land, but were not productive. They could be breadwinners, yet did not control the economic powers. Therefore a process of emancipation begins with 'power from within', it is energising,

both mentally and physically. It makes people think differently, see issues with a different eye, it involves formation of 'really useful knowledge' and generates new understanding which stimulate people to action. Once individuals are empowered the type of leadership adopted moves away from conflicting interests, to the 'form of power which can persuade or open up new possibilities' (Rowlands, 1998:13).

It may be argued that political forces have made educational policies ineffective. The racist ideology had direct influence on the direction and emphases in educational policies in the 1980s. Racism was dominant. Education had been separated into racial and ethnic departments since 1956 but had the worst effects of education for adults during the latter half of the 1980s. The result of such an oppressive system was a South Africa where the majority of the population were unskilled and semi-skilled. The liberatory education programmes that emerged to challenge divisive and racist education systems, in turn indicated the need for programmes of adult basic education.

Another colonial ideology - Christianity - was influential with its cultural dimension built into the basic value of education. Christianity promoted obedience and loyalty, and hence provided the framework for a social order which was maintained by repression. Patriarchal systems maintained by traditional authority in rural areas also tended to delay educational programmes for women. Education was thus a tool for maintaining the status quo, the power of one race and sex and, also thereby supported the marginal status of women.

All the above factors – politics, racism, economics, culture, and gender formed the background to the high profile of adult basic education and training. They each were manifest at different eras in the historical periods in South Africa. The origin and development of ABE in its earlier period relied much on the reading of the empowerment theories of Freire. From these redefinitions informal education served to raise the consciousness of masses in South Africa to fight for justice.

Nationally, South Africans and learners in Moutse used alternative education to gather knowledge and build understanding about the origin and manifestations of power – processes described in chapter three. This knowledge was applied and helped to change the politics of the country into the newly-formed democracy. It has been seen in chapters two and three that because people were pro-active, women in the forefront when men were either political exiles or economic migrants, they engaged in educative processes independent of the state. The people instituted principles that promoted and valued participation broadly, and relied on indigenous values shared among them. Such principles have been found to be effective at a local level when cultural and traditional values are built into ‘learning’ processes.

After the 1994 democratic elections adult basic education fell short of broad participation and people-centred principles. In chapter four it was noted that the single non-racial education system still contained conflicting interests. Further the priority seemed to be that of an economic agenda and less a focus upon addressing injustice and developing principles of equity. Emphasis was seen to be upon skills acquisition, training, competency and a demonstration of measurable outcomes. Education, to use Green’s (1997) observation, has become inextricably linked to the socio-political and economic agenda of the State.

This thesis has shown that the nature and process of educational policies have been shaped by forces on three tiers: at a macro level are the global pressures originating from structures which have conflicting interests; at the national level are the contradictory ways in which the state tries to respond to demands and expectations to meet the educational needs of a society, and finally, there are local interests determined by the cultures and traditions of a community. Each of these factors influenced the role, nature and goals of adult basic education and training. ABET thus

became part of a competitive arena which emerged with a bias toward particularistic and individualistic values.

The content of the ABET programme, underpinned by the Outcome Based Education model, required a predetermined curriculum and in chapter four it was seen to have potentially limiting access for people who in the past were most excluded by racist educational policy. This exclusion, as the findings from Moutse indicate, is likely to have a continuing impact on women. Women do not feature as primary stakeholders in decision making, but serve secondary functions in administration and coordination of project duties. The learners' concerns although encouraged were not articulated in the content of the curriculum as well as in the observed lessons. These gaps in the areas of learning were found to have no immediate relevance and use of by some women.

Furthermore, the background conditions and prevailing circumstances seem not to be considered when learning programmes are planned. Age can either be an advantage or a disadvantage to accessing educational privileges. Prior learning and acquired experiences from the women's movement and the political struggles is not encouraged as a significant factor to where women have taken the struggle. The type of representation that women in Moutse are demanding in local and national structures is not in only in terms of quantitative representation within structures, but a call - for a change to an engendered attitude in the structures of power and decision making. They have analysed the leadership in local structures which they discovered were dominated by traditional systems. Patriarchal systems discrimination against women owning land. Opportunities to establish pre-school and primary education were delayed in some villages because of conflicting interests between development activists and traditional bureaucrats. In order to have their voices heard and their concerns articulated, they have mobilised among themselves, they have determined the criteria for representation in local and national structures; they were aware that they had Constitutional Rights to land and land ownership. With this information,

they co-opted and mobilised men to support their group's efforts within the confines of the informal structures.

However the learning programmes as described in chapter four in which many women had registered, is centralised at policy level and decentralised for implementation and monitoring. Consequently there are policy decisions taken at different levels resulting in different perceptions about the purposes and expectations and an increase in 'dependency culture' discussed in the findings.

In addition, implementation of the education policy - the Multi-Year Plan, which was designed to address literacy needs of people who never went to school in the past, was restricted by a number of other factors. Financial resources were inadequate, teachers were not well trained in the principles underpinning the policy, and they had very low morale as they were expected to implement a plan which they had not been actively involved in shaping. Therefore, one might argue that issues of exclusion in the 'new' era do not have to do so much with race, but rather with the origin and processes of policy formulation.

Indeed it can be noted from this research that although the major players, that is the State, practitioners and learners, share a common vision for a just and literate South Africa, they do not hold similar perceptions of the purpose and nature of ABET. The findings have illustrated that, at a conceptual level, ABET is regarded as a plan to achieve specific goals, within a given time, in accordance with measurable outcomes. It makes education programmes for adults market-oriented and result-oriented processes. The research indicates that there seems to be a substantive bias towards economic transformation, skill acquisition and quantitative measures as ultimate goals. The assumed linear relationship between the use of literacy and economic emancipation as the major focus was limiting. Such an assumption regards learners as 'empty vessels' who must be 'filled in' with literacy in order to be economically

effective. It also limits the learners to certification as the primary measure of performance with less consideration of qualitative personal development and critical understanding. Whilst economic transformation is an ideal goal, many elderly women in Moutse were left on the margins because there were no 'alternative' programmes to address their specific needs beyond certification.

The research has illustrated how the agenda for "real" transformation has changed from one period to another. The political liberation agenda propagated and fulfilled during the 1980s has gradually been redefined. The curriculum of 'really useful knowledge' seems now to be absent. ABET aims to promote the Human Resource and Development agenda, in which functional skills, technological knowledge and human capacity are being addressed. While all these are necessary requirements for a society which has to compete in a global market, the processes of re-defining the 'new' agenda seems to have lost the 'voices of significant others', particularly teachers, adult learners and specifically women. In addition, the staff and learners in Moutse perceived the Multi-Year Plan' as a 'process' in continuity. Social empowerment, capacity building, social interaction are considered characteristics that make ABET a 'service' and not a mere project. It is important in a country the majority of whose citizens are lowly skilled to take cognisance of its past inequities; to consider the conditions and circumstances of women so that their needs are addressed.

The preceding paragraphs have addressed the macro influences of global structures that have had an impact on the development of ABET. It has been shown, for example, how emphasis shifted from the agenda of social justice and reconstruction, to one which supported market oriented imperatives. At a micro level, local structures in which power rested on the traditional authority of Chiefs delayed or sometimes stalled educational progress in Moutse. An example was when one of the learning centres in Weldevrede was closed because of conflicting ideas on how the centre was controlled and financially management. This is an area with fewer number of pre-

schools and education begins at higher grades. If younger kids could not go to school this put demand on women to take care of children many of whom would delay their school entry. For these reasons the continuing illiteracy rate of 85% in Moutse does not happen by default.

The processes of setting up adult learning centres, how these were managed and controlled were all factors that impacted on the progress of ABET. At the same time, it was illustrated that learners and facilitators understood the impediments of such traditional structures. They understood that areas like Ntwane and Weldevrede villages, where the progress was delayed by traditional systems of government, programmes for adult education and training were affected negatively or non-existent.

Although the findings point to the powerful and limiting impact that the macro and micro forces have on the educational development and practice, opportunities for resisting the impact seem to prevail in a local world of women. They have begun to 'define their own worlds' by taking on the traditional values like equality, lifelong learning and mutual accountability, and by applying them as underlying principles to redefine programmes in which equality, social justice and humanity are upheld. Women are not equating themselves with the past nor present circumstances; they are re-defining themselves first as human beings, second as able individuals who have the potential to change their worlds and the worlds of others.

In chapter six it was seen that the elderly members of a literacy project in Moutse found the site for adult education a 'site for social interaction' while the facilitators perceived their role as a 'service', speaks to the traditional mores that have shaped educational development in the area. 'Social interaction' and 'service' in the community are not considered a mere task or a job but a 'way of life' in which the principle which says 'the spirit in you makes me who I am'. This is the '*ubuntu*' principle and it motivates people to be part of political and educative processes. Adult

basic education in this area is seen as part of the social fabric and is not separated from the culture and the ways people were socialised to be responsible for others first and themselves last.

They seek a better, more equitable and just society through informal education. They have adopted multi-disciplinary and collaborative strategies in which men were invited as 'co-partners' in development processes. Instead of adopting the approaches that focus on 'women's concerns', they devoted time to practices of 'equity' for all, principles that were prevalent and forceful during the era of informal education in the 1980s.

However, because their efforts were later directed within a 'formal' ABET framework and within societal rural structures which functioned on the basis of unequal power relations, the impact of their abilities has been lessened. The determination to sustain communal and collective responsibilities tended to be undermined by the male dominant organisational cultures maintained in social institutions. Although attempts were made at MCLP to address gender equality among the staff and in the programme plans, in practice, the functioning and nature of power relations seemed to project societal patterns of male dominance. Nonetheless, women in this case study have not been discouraged from achieving what they want. They have adopted multi-disciplinary and collaborative strategies in which men are invited as 'co-partners' in development processes.

The thesis has argued that women's emancipation required (in addition to an understanding of the influence of macro and micro forces), an understanding of male domination of formal institutions of learning. But understanding can be the same as awareness and consciousness raising which by itself is inadequate. It is suggested that a dual process of 're-educating' or 're-learning' should not only be confined to informal programmes. Education need not be confined to formal structures but should

begin at home, within communities, among individuals and within structures in society. Most importantly, a deliberate and conscious integration of gender equality programme should form one of the core content in the Learning Areas of ABET.

This thesis has shown that in an effort to move towards transformative curricula, understanding should be not merely how power functions, and its underlying assumptions, but more importantly of the alliances that women have begun to redefine. These alliances challenge the competitive culture, but recognise equal dignity among human beings with less emphasis on women as 'sexual' beings.

It can be inferred from the research that although knowledge acquisition was empowering for women in a local context, it was confined to their worlds. Some learners used "acquired knowledge" primarily at a personal level to build their self esteem, and improve their economic positions. Some used 'really useful knowledge' that enhanced their ability to question issues of environmental rights, land rights, and gender.

In conclusion, therefore, it has been shown how the 'new' ABET policy has taken away the radical form and the voluntary nature of education which people learnt during the struggle for political liberation.

The experiential learning from historical developments and "acquired knowledge" have been directed into conformity with the 'predetermined' knowledge, so that learning and education have not functioned freely. It is this structured form of education that has created the 'dependency culture' displayed at MCLP. Such tensions continue to be characteristic of education generally as well as adult basic education and training specifically. The challenge therefore is how women work through the conflicting tensions within the formal and informal education structures, - how they assert the sense of priority in systems that are male biased. By definition the design of ABET seems to have detracted from the spontaneity, the social ethic to do

good for others, the attitude of 'service to others' and has developed into a structured, professional and controlled organisations that support individualism.

Although Adult Basic Education in South Africa has been evident in programmes that developed within the political struggle for liberation, its 'new' form may not achieve the goals of a just, equitable society and a non-sexist education, whether they will be attained is open to debate. The need remains to build upon the powerful collective and communal values and abandon the separatist and divisive strategies characteristic of the past racist history.

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Appendix 1

Key Informants

- K1.** Dr. Vivienne Taylor: South African Gender Equality Commissioner.
- K2.** Dr. Shirley Walters: Director – Centre for Adult and Community Education, University of Western Cape.
- K3.** Catherine Kell: Adult Education Researcher - University of Cape Town.
- K4.** Katherine Odora-Hoppers: Deputy Director interviewed at the Centre for Education Policy Development and Evaluation.
- K5.** Professor M. Mamdani: Director interviewed at the Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town.
- K6.** Barbara Watson: Director interviewed at the Women's Development Forum.
- K7.** Gugu Nxumalo: Director, Adult Basic Education in the National Department of Education, Pretoria.
- K8.** Ngobeni and Ncgobo, the 'plot' owners.
- K9.** Solveches Mahlangu, the Ndebele herdsman, poet and historian.
- K10.** A spokesman representing the baNtwane chief

Appendix 2

Respondents to the Semi-structured Interviews.

Learners

- L1.** maJiyane Selina
- L2.** maMsiza Selina
- L3.** Ngema Obed
- L4.** maNgema Thenjiwe
- L5.** maMashigo
- L6.** maMakuwa Mapule
- L7.** maMkhabela Busisiwe
- L8.** Sibande Martha

Founder Members of the Project

- Fm1.** maMadlala: one of the founder members and a Trustee on the management committee.
- Fm2.** Thosago: Secretary of the management committee and a Trustee.
- Fm3.** Malapela: Chairperson of the Board of Trustees and a local community representative on educational matters.

Facilitators

- F1.** Kebareng
- F2.** Nelson Ntuli
- F3.** Abednigo Nkambule
- F4.** Solly Maredi
- F5.** General Marota
- F6.** Plantina Makitla

Staff

- S1.** Themba Mahlangu.
- S2.** Thulani Mawela.
- S3.** Plantina Makitla
- S4.** Rachel Simelane
- S5.** Lilian Matemotja

Focus Groups G1 and G2

Appendix 3

Interview Schedule for the Staff on Management

1. How long have you been a member of staff at Masifundisane?
2. What did you do before you joined Masifundisane?
3. Why did you join this project?
4. What is the difference between a literacy facilitator and an adult education facilitator?
5. How many women facilitators are there in the project?
6. How long have the women facilitators been on this project?
7. What do you understand by Gender Equity?
8. Why do you say the women should be brought on equal footing with men?
9. What do you understand by women's empowerment?
10. Are you therefore implying that the project is creating space for women in the leadership?
11. Can you take me through the process that you followed to put this criteria in place.
12. Does the project have any policy on Gender Equality?
13. What were the other contributory factors that influenced the performance of the learners?
14. Has this process had any effect on other staff?
15. Can you explain to me the staff development plans at Masifundisane?
16. Why are there more women who manage the learning centres?
17. How has the project empowered its women staff?

18. How did the male staff react to that programme of empowerment?
19. Has that programme affected the learners at all?

Interview Schedule for the Facilitators

1. How long have you been on the staff at Masifundisane?
2. What did you do before you joined Masifundisane?
3. Why did you join this project?
4. How many women facilitators are there in the project?
5. Do you regard yourself as a literacy facilitator or an adult education facilitator?
6. What is the difference between the two?
7. In which subject area(s) do you facilitate?

Numeracy	[]
English	[]
Mother Tongue	[]
Social Studies	[]
Other	[]
8. Mention some of the teaching methods that you use in teaching?
9. Do you think the information that the learners acquire in class encourage them to think of issues about gender equality?
10. Are there any staff development programmes for staff?
11. What type of programmes has MCLP exposed its staff?

Training	[]
Exposure	[]
Workshops	[]
Conferences	[]
12. In which ways do these programmes foster positive gender relations among staff?
13. How does MCLP create conditions in which self-esteem among women facilitators is realised?

14. Are you involved in any community activities that address women issues?
15. How do learners participate in the planning decisions of the project?

Interview Guide for the Learners

Note: The questions below were used as guides only. Each was followed by a probing conversational question depending on the response given on each question.

1. How long have you lived in this area?
2. Where did you stay before?
3. How did you know about Masifundisane?
4. Why did you enrol in this programme?
5. Has the programme been of any personal benefit to you?
6. In what way(s)?
7. What do you think of the position of women in Moutse?
8. What has caused this?
9. Do you think women have progressed in this are of Moutse?
10. How did this happen?
11. Are you involved in any programmes that involve women in your village?

Brief Backgrounds of Learners who were interviewed

L1) maJiyane Selina born on the 10 October 1960 lives with both in-laws who are very old. They live in a modern built 5 room home, electrified with big size rooms (5 x 6 meters). There are cottage like structures at the back of the yard for tools and a chicken fowl. Her own mother is still alive but lives out of the Moutse area.

maJiyane lost her only child when she was one year. She has not tried much to have any more children. She considers herself an assertive entrepreneur who learnt sewing by imitating her mentor seamstress, and acquired the skill of how to cut patterns and sew dresses. This was as far back in 1985. She volunteered to help her mentor maMasimela until she was able to set her own seamstress in her house.

She saved all her profits and accumulated extra R150,00 with which she bought her own material. After some years her husband asked her to work from home and not with the mentor.

She said that her breaking point in the business was in 1994 when various religious groups in the area began to place orders for her to sew uniforms. She could not cope on her own. She invited a neighbour maNgema to join her. Her future dream is to build a sewing business managed from home where they are currently operating. She would like to hire a few seamstresses, (about 6 to begin with). She feels confident that through this project she can create employment for 26 more people.

(L2) maMsiza, Selina 36 years old was born in Komatipoort at the borders of South Africa and Mozambique. She's been in residence in Moutse for 13 years, married in the last 10 years. She lives on a hired plot with her husband, a 15 year old daughter – the only child and a brother in law. Both parents-in-law, retired, live in the same yard in a separate well built house. She does not have any formal work. The interview was conducted at her house which was being extended during the day of the interview. She said that she missed two lessons on that same week because she was preparing lunch and drawing water for the builders. When I asked if she would be attending class the following week she said '*angazi noma ngizoya, angazi*' 'I do not know if I will attend, I do not know'.

(L3) Obed Ngema is married to maNgema. They live in an L-shaped home with their children. The house is grey plastered on the outside. They use the front room for sewing although the windows in that room do not have glasses. One window has corrugated timber and others have cupboard papers stuck on the frames. Whenever they are on duty, they have to keep the door wide open for natural light, and at times the wind disturbs them as it blows the materials off the sewing machines.

They have two sewing machines which they bought in 1997. Prior to that they had used a borrowed machine from ma Masesi Mavuso. She is Swazi by origin, married in Moutse. maMavuso had never used a sewing machine prior to joining the Ngema's and maMsiza. She is unemployed. Thenjiwe Ngema registered for a sewing course in Cullinan in 1993. The course lasted three weeks at a cost of R350. Upon completion she bought material as part of her investment when she joined her husband who was already recruited by maJiyane. They are now all self-employed since 1994.

(L4) maNgema Thenjiwe a Level 3 learner at Umthombo we Mfundo is 34 years old. She is married to Obed Ngema.

PO Box 988

Dennilton

1030

013 983 0562

(L5) maMashigo is 34 years. Always beaming with smiles, she lives in OR Tambo in an extended modern home. At the time of the research she was not registered at MCLP. She now runs a 'tuck shop' selling snacks at one of the high schools outside her village. Although the small business is still on the profit margin, she aims to get the poultry business running soon. She has already built the chicken In the yard. She expressed confidence that very soon she will be working from her home yard.

(L6) maMakuwa was born on the 8th January 1958, also a Level 3 learner at OR Tambo lives at a different area called Elandsdooring within Moutse. She lives with her two children, a grandson who is two and her father-in-law. Her husband works in Sasolburg, a town in the Guteng province. He comes home at the end of each month for a week-end.

maMakuwa has lived in Elandsdooring since 1992 when they arrived from Hendrina. She attends classes in the afternoon. In the morning she is fully occupied with home chores and taking care of the grandson whose mother is still school going age (19) and also runs a fruit and vegetable tuck shop in the backyard of her well extended and brightly painted big home. Home sell has been her interest since 1985 when she tried her luck selling beans. She changed the product when people could not afford packets of beans and targeted student who liked the pickled hot chilli mango salad mixed in oil. She realised that the product was a fast daily sell for both families and school children and it has kept the business going.

PO Box 89

Dennilton1030

013 980 0332

(L7) maMkhabela Busi is 40 years. She lives in Eshleleni in the Ntwane village which is still under the rule and local management of chiefs. She is married under Customary Law to her husband who is originally from Maputo in Mozambique. He lives and works in the coal mines in Middleburg (the provincial administrative town)

which is an hours' drive out of Moutse. She stays home with their seven children and a brother in law who is on part time work now and again. She alternates bi-weekly visits with her husband.

maMkhabela is a Level 3 learner at OR Tambo Centre. Although there is a learning centre in the village she decided by preference to register at OR Tambo. She runs a vegetable and fruit shop in the yard. One of her sons, 9 years old is very keen to maintain the shop when his mother attends classes in the afternoons. Her future intentions are to run a poultry business and export chicken to Mozambique. She would like to see herself engaged in social welfare activities to improve the living conditions of the village people.

Martha Sibande, 18 years old, emigrated from Zimbabwe in 1997. She was attending school when the family moved to Moutse. She could not enrol at a local school to continue her Secondary education. Per agreement with the Centre co-ordinator, she attends the adult classes to keep her mind working.

Appendix 7

Impressions of Learner participation on Learner's Day

Observation Schedule on Learner's Day: 25/06/1998

Time: 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Each year a special review meeting for learners is held. Each learning centre nominates a learner representative who participates in the review process with the head of departments and centre supervisors. In this meeting ideas and suggestions from the learners are encouraged so that the plans for the year can be reviewed.

Agenda:

Who sets the agenda?

The director []

Supervisors [x]

Other []

Do the learners contribute items for discussions?

Yes []

No [x]

How do each of the learner representatives consult their constituencies for agenda items?

One by one []

Class meeting [x]

Total number of learner representatives

[27] Female

[5] Male

[32] Total

Total number of supervisors

[4] Female

[4] Male

[9] Total

Requency of input

Female	Male
9 – 10 = /	
10 – 11 = /////	/////
11 – 12 = ///// ///// /	/
12 – 01 = ///// /	/////
01 – 02 = /	//
02 – 03 =	
03 – 04 =	

Who makes the most suggestions?

The chairperson ☐
Learners ☒
Other staff ☐

Who responds and or supports the suggestions?

The chairperson ☐
Learners ☒
Other staff ☐

Were the ideas opened for further discussion?

Yes ☒
No ☐

Whose opinions or voices were the loudest?

Female ☐
Male ☐
Both ☒

Who chaired the meeting? F/M (please circle).

Who was the scribe?F/M (please circle).

Any other general comments about the meeting's deliberations:

"...learners were promised that they will get the dictionaries on the 6th July, 1998 and the reading material on the 27th July 1998.

Learners were having serious problems in English language at their center. They cannot read or write in English. The suggestions from learners was that facilitators should speak in English when they facilitate Numeracy and English so that they can also be able to speak in English"

MASIFUNDISANE COMMUNITY LITERACY PROJECT

ABET RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP MEETING
MASIFUNDISANE CLP
AND
MS KHANYA RAJUILI (RESEACHER)

(06 MARCH 1998)

Purpose of the Meeting

To enable Khanya to meet, brief and be briefed by Masifundisane's programme delivery staff (the Facilitators, Supervisors, Course Unit Heads - CUH, Delivery Evaluation & Examination Secretary, Programme Director and Admin. Staff)

AGENDA

ITEM	TIME	PERSON RESPONSIBLE
1. Welcome and background to the meeting	08h00 - 08h10	Themba
2. Introductions	08h10 - 08h20	Themba
3. Brief Work Presentations by CUH and Supervisors	08h20 - 09h00	Rachael
4. Questions and Clarification during presentations	09h00 - 09h10	Rachael
5. Brief presentation on Khanya's research programme	09h10 - 09h30	Khanya
6. Questions and Clarifications	09h30 - 10h00	Themba
7. Any matters of the day	10h00 - 10h15	Themba
8. Closure	10h15	Themba

POSTAL ADDRESS

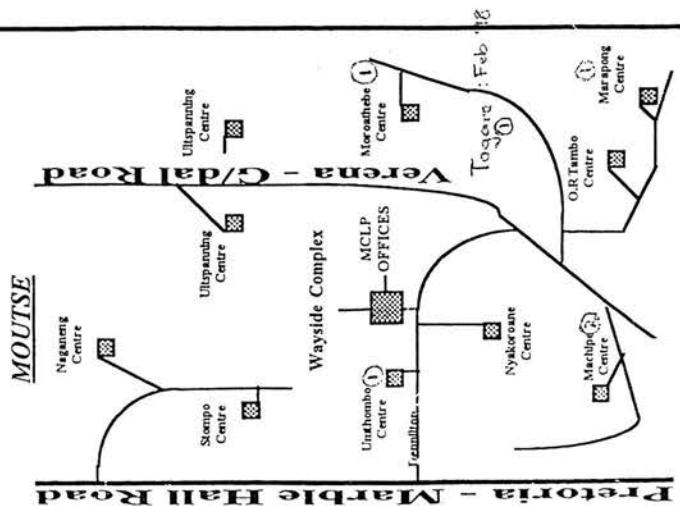
P.O. BOX 574
DENNILTON
1030
TEL: (013) 983 0171
983 1379
FAX: (015) 983 1370

PHYSICAL ADDRESS

PLOT NUMBER 244
PHILADELPHIA HOSPITAL ROAD
WAYSIDE SHOPPING COMPLEX
MOUTSE
MPUMALANGA PROVINCE
SOUTH AFRICA
(Not for Postage)

WHERE ARE WE?

(MASIFUNDISANE MAP)



PROGRAMME FINANCING

Masifundisane is a non profit making community based organisation. We raise funds internally from learners, staff and facilitators, externally from the local businesses and private donors. Partnership has been formed with government, donors, organisations and individuals.

TARGET GROUP

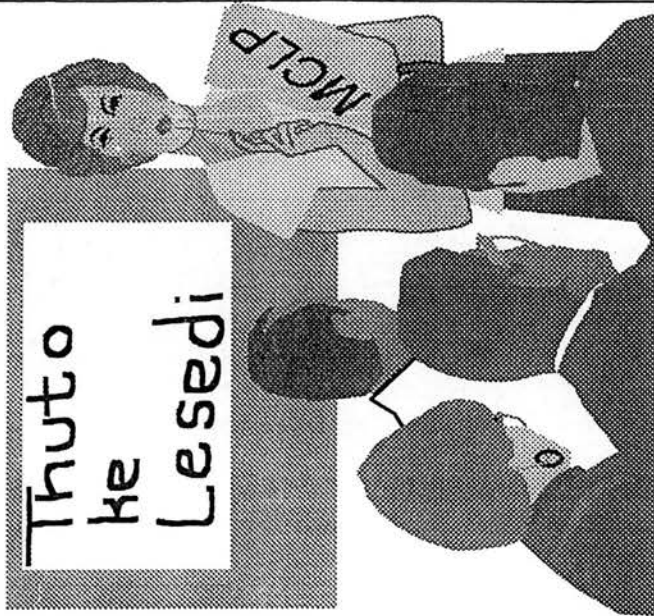
All persons in between the ages of 18 - 60 and above, especially women, who are either completely illiterate or semi-illiterate (below STD 5 of formal schooling). Top priority is given to underprivileged women.

LEVELS COVERED:

STANDARD	GRADE	IEB & MCLP LEVELS
SSA	G 1	Literacy or Level 1A
SSB	G 2	
STD 1	G 3	Level 1
STD 2	G 4	
STD 3	G 5	Level 2
STD 4	G 6	
STD 5	G 7	Level 3

MASIFUNDISANE COMMUNITY LITERACY PROJECT

Thuto
ke
Lesedi



AN AFFILIATE OF THE
NATIONAL LITERACY
CO-OPERATIVE
AND MEMBER PROJECT OF
MASAKHANE COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT TRUST



Photo 1: K8 Ngobeni (left) and Negobo

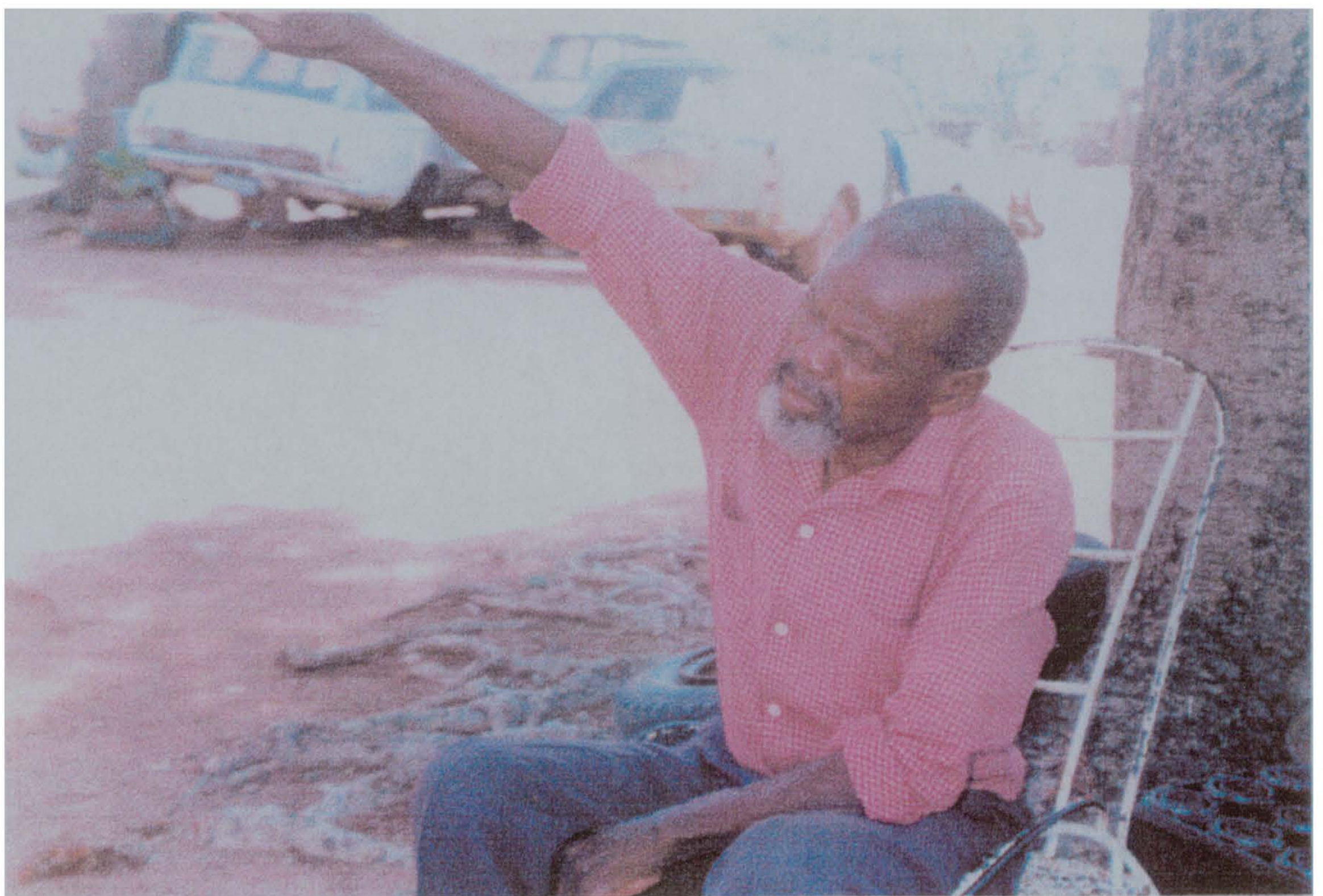


Photo 2: K8 Ngobeni pointing towards the village where they originally came from



Photo 3: G2 members at a Graduation Ceremony, May 1998



Photo 4: L1 maJiyane Selina



Photo 5: L4 maNgema (left) and Obed Ngema



Photo 6: L5 maMashigo selling at school



Photo 7: L6 maMakuwa preparing for the home sell



Photo : L2 maMsiza missed classes drawing water for the builders